

THE WORLD'S LONGEST RUNNING MAGAZINE OF CULT ENTERTAINMENT

★ STARBURST ★

DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

Return to the madhouse with
our celebration of the entire
PLANET OF THE APES saga!

ALSO:

TRUE BLOOD

VIDEO NASTIES

THE 100

DOCTOR WHO

FROM DUSK TILL DAWN

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

AND MORE!

MOVIES ★ TV ★ GAMING ★ AUDIO ★ COMICS ★ BOOKS

ISSUE
402

STARBURST
CULT ENTERTAINMENT
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MEETS DONNIE DARKO"

LETTERBOXD

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"VIOLENT & UTTERLY ORIGINAL"

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JUNE 23RD

VIRGIN
MOVIES



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STARBURST

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to STARBURST Issue 402.

You have probably realised by now that we have introduced quite a
major change this month. Hot on the heels of our Issue 400 revamp,
we have decided to alter our cover policy. There will be some of
you that remember, that after taking over as Editor, one of the first
decisions I made was to switch back to artwork covers, free of
cover lines. Whilst these have proven to be very popular there are
also those of you that prefer a more traditional photo cover, and
we have received regular emails/letters asking for two versions. I
am extremely pleased to say that from this issue onwards we will
be producing a Newsstand Edition, sporting a photo image, and a
Collectors' Edition, with our usual art cover, complete with classic
logo. The Collectors' Edition will be available in selected stores, and
can also be obtained by subscription or direct sale via our website.

The Collectors' Edition is limited so I really would recommend
subscribing to make sure you always get one – plus you save
money! This month we welcome a new artist to the fold, Mr Paul
Loudon, who has produced a bloody fantastic Planet of the Apes
Collectors' Edition cover. It's one of my favourites.

As we go to print, Dawn of the Planet of the Apes is about to be
released. As usual we put this latest chapter in this fascinating
franchise into perspective as we journey through the history of
its myriad incarnations. I was obsessed with these movies as a
kid, then got blown away with the rest of you when "Rise" literally
resurrected the franchise in a totally unexpected way. If the early
'90s belonged to the Turtles then the '70s was the decade of the
Ape. It's hard to believe they have made a twenty-first century
comeback, but here we are with a new saga for the smartphone
generation. Dig right in and bring yourself up to date with the story
so far in this simian-centric issue of STARBURST.

We also interview Bob Morley, star of E4's new sci-fi show The 100,
filmmaker Jake West, director of Video Nasties: Draconian Days,
preview the Guardians of the Galaxy movie, recap the story so far
with True Blood, and much, much, more.

Also, don't forget that to bag a free sub you just need to get chosen
as our Star Letter. Get in contact!

Until next time, Keep watching the weird and wonderful...


Jordan M. Royce
EDITOR

FEEDBACK

You can write to STARBURST via snail mail:
STARBURST MAGAZINE, PO Box 4508, Manchester, M61 0GY
or email: letters@starburstmagazine.com

THE RETURN OF EDDIE HADDOCK

Hi all! Congrats for totally
recapturing that magic 'must
read' feel that was part and
parcel of STARBURST in its
early days (and which had
faded in the final days of Visual
Imagination). I've fallen in love
with the mag all over again.

Thanks also for the Brosnan
tribute in issue 400. Like reader
Chris Gibbings' letter last
month, I was lucky enough to
meet John (more than once
over the years) and he always
put a smile on my face, the
first time while trying to avoid
buying me a 'promised' pint at a
fantasy film convention (the sly

STAR

THE MORGUE THE MERRIER

Enjoyed the recent coverage retrospective on *The Living Dead at the Manchester Morgue*. My early discovery of said film goes way way back, before STARBURST, in a review in *Hammer House of Horror*. My first ever viewing of TLDATMM was in 1982 at a before midnight screening at a Holiday Camp, shown on cine film with at least four intervals due to manual reel changes. My last screening was in 2000 on the festival circuit in Manchester, where I'm certain I scared Jorge Grau as we travelled between floors in a lift with a mind of its own!

Howard T Pell,
KEIGHLEY, WEST YORKSHIRE

LETTER

bugger convincingly claiming I'd got the wrong man!) and, best of the lot, over the course of a few issues mistakenly calling me a Haddock and then dryly apologising for it at the end of his column in issue 206! He is much missed.

Bringing things up to date, I was well pleased to read your rave review for *Cheap Thrills* in issue 401. Saw this at Frightfest last August and have been banging on to anyone who'll listen ever since about how brilliant it is. Chris Holt is spot on when he suggests going into this one knowing as little as possible. I'd just like to add that the larger the audience you see it with the more fun you'll have as the film is guaranteed to elicit mass laughs and despairing groans in equal measure. And the final shot is iconic.

Thanks again for rediscovering that indefinable spirit that made STARBURST such a joy to read in the first place. It's like being a teenager all over again!

Eddie Maddock, via email

THE YESTERDAY PEOPLE

I always enjoy reading Paul Mount's column, but issue 402's TV Zone was like a TV graveyard - The Tomorrow People AND Star-Crossed have both just been cancelled! I tuned into the first episode of *The Tomorrow People* on E4,

but I think I'm a bit too old for it, and as for *Star-Crossed*, I'm definitely too old for that. But it seems not enough young folk were watching either, I imagine. The CW will determine they have to try harder next time and will show twice as much bare flesh...

Anyway, I hope Mr Mount isn't cursed, as the other television show he mentioned was *Doctor Who*! Noooo!

Jeremy Byrne, DUMFRIES

Vulcan ears prick up Shauna says: "SOUNDS GOOD TO ME! Oh... About more bare flesh than it's not about Doctor Who being cancelled, but now you mention it - sounds good to me!"

[Editor's Note: Shauna's views on Doctor Who are not shared by the rest of the STARBURST team. Nor is her obsession with naked teenage boys.]

SPI-DISSECTION

It's great to read a magazine which isn't afraid to go against the grain, nor call a spade a spade. I picked up the last issue without seeing it before, and laughed like a hyena at the dissection of *Amazing Spider-Man 2*. I'm going to have to find the back issues now to catch up with what I've missed!

Kerry Newsome, NEWCASTLE

Head to our website to fill the gaps in your collection, Kerry, we have a limited supply left of most back issues. Failing that, our Honorary-Editor-In-Chief Dez Skinn makes a nice sideline floggin' 'em on eBay, so he'll be able to hook you up, we're sure!



"Alright, alright! I use Vidal Baboon conditioner. That's my secret"

Winner: Ryan Holt. Head over to www.starburstmagazine.com to enter this month's caption contest.

HUMPZILLA

What was going on in the top right hand corner picture on page 74 last month? Godzilla ****ing a weird rock lion? And that show was for kids? Made me chuckle anyway. Stay strange, STARBURST!

I really want to check out the *Godzilla* cartoon now, maybe they will release it this year along with all the movies that are still unavailable; I knew there were a lot but hadn't realised there were SO many until I read your two-part *Evacuate Tokyo* feature! I'm hooked after my cinema trip last week, but my mates weren't as thrilled, what did you guys think?

Nic Hadfield, via email

Even *Godzilla* gets lonely sometimes, Nic. We hear speed dating didn't work out that well for him, he just got a lot of mess on his new shiny date shoes. Well, like they always say, there's plenty more... oh. He could always try internet dating, we recommend www.talldating.co.uk. As for what we thought of the horny fella's latest big screen outing, check out our review on page 69.

CULT ACTION

As a long time reader, I just wanted to say how much I appreciate the in-depth articles that fill the magazine every issue. It's like having an encyclopedia on a different subject each month. I'm constantly trying to guess what the next one would be. As you've now changed your tagline to "cult entertainment",

does that mean we might get more action movies (the more brain dead the better I say!). Keep up the good work!

John Hart, GLASGOW

Is *The Expendables 3* brain dead enough for you, John? If so you'll be happy when you pick up our next issue! (Although nobody else need panic, it's not the cover feature, we promise. We'll leave you all guessing on that front.)

UN(TUR)TIL NEXT TIME...

I was wondering if you will be doing a retrospective look at the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* when the movie comes out? If so, I can't wait to read it!

Phil Anderson, PLYMOUTH

Though the UK release is still set for October 17th, a mind-boggling two-and-a-half months later than the US, we promise not to leave TMNT fans waiting so long. (That's Phil and John both sorted for next month then!)

twitter

@STARBURST_MAG

Our followers discuss the latest movies in development...

@WatsonWayne
on FANTASTIC FOUR:
"Fantastic Four reboot sounds increasingly bad. Sooner @Marvel reclaims rights to all its titles, especially *XMen, the better"

@ReecemJones
on GHOSTBUSTERS III:
"let it die. That's the best option at this point."

@david0akes
on INDEPENDENCE DAY 2:
"seeing as how ID might be a 2 parter - should we write it as ID4-2-1?"

@tariqlatif42
on STAR WARS EPISODE VII casting:
"I think Adam Driver's playing a Tauntaun. Why? The LongFace"

@Black_Jack_B
on the BANANAMAN movie:
"Will the Bananaman EU be treated as canon or have I wasted years of my life reading the novels?"



THINGS TO COME

A ROUND-UP OF THE
BEST (AND WORST)
OF THIS MONTH'S
MOVIE / TV NEWS

a rob zombie film



What the hell is 31? Good question, but sadly Zombie's on "Top Secret Clown Business" here, revealing nothing other than, "This is for the hardcore fans who want it nasty and brutal!" Probably not the sequel to adorable body-swap movie **13 Going on 30** then. Could the cult filmmaker be returning to the world of the Firefly family perhaps? The makeup does bear a passing resemblance to **House of 1000 Corpses** and **The Devil's Rejects'** patriarchal Captain Spaulding after all. Or maybe the 31 of the title is a sly reference to the date a certain holiday falls each year, and he's helming **Halloween 3D**, the recently greenlit third entry in the rebooted series? We're probably not alone in hoping that it turns out to be the former.

MANIAC COP

For a while now it's been known that **Drive** director Nicolas Winding Refn has been trying to get a **Maniac Cop** remake off the ground, and this month saw the redo moving closer to becoming a reality after adding Ed Brubaker to its ranks, with the acclaimed writer fresh off the highly successful **Captain America: The Winter Soldier**. To be developed by Wild Bunch, Refn will serve as a producer, as will the original film's helmer, William Lustig. There's no director at present, but expect an announcement very shortly.

Starring Robert Z'Dar, Bruce Campbell and genre vet Tom Atkins, the original **Maniac Cop** has gathered quite the cult following since its release in 1988, so much so that two sequels followed. The less said about them, the better. | AP

DAMIAN

With Norman Bates and Hannibal Lecter having both successfully transitioned to the small screen, now comes word that Damian Thorn of **The Omen** is the next horror icon to be re-imagined for television audiences. Glen Mazzara, former showrunner of **The Walking Dead**, is developing the series, which will simply be called **Damien**. The show will act as a sequel of sorts to the 1976 original, telling the tale of Damian, now an adult, as he has to deal with his past and, more importantly, embrace his future as the Antichrist. Mazzara will write **Damien's** script, with him also serving as an executive producer through his 44 Strong Productions company. The show has apparently already been sold to Fox Television Studios.

Directed by Richard Donner, **The Omen** starred Gregory Peck and Lee Remick as the adopted parents of Damian, originally played by Harvey Spencer Stephens. Of course, the child is revealed to be pure evil by the movie's end. **The Omen** would go on to spawn three sequels and a failed reboot, all of which **Damien** will likely ignore. Sorry, Sam Neill fans! | AP

POWER RANGERS

Lionsgate, home of such powerhouse franchises as **The Hunger Games** and **Twilight**, has joined forces with Saban Brands to deliver a new take on the latter's **Power Rangers** property in a brand new live-action Mighty Morphin' movie! That's right, forget all that **Super Megaforce** guff, this project will go right back to basics and reintroduce modern audiences to the original high-schooler line-up that delighted kids (and adults with too much free time on their hands) when it was first introduced in 1993. Though no facts exist beyond the companies' joint announcement yet, rumours have already begun to swirl regarding potential screenwriters (**Chronicle's** Max Landis) and stars (**Twilight's** shirt-dodging weredude, Taylor Lautner).

BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE



Nope, that's not the title of our World's Finest fan-fic, that really is what Warner Bros have settled on as the official moniker for their **Man of Steel** sequel. Let's be kind though, they only had a year to work on it. Cough. Still, at least Ben Affleck's recently revealed beefy Batman looks encouragingly different than screen incarnations of the past, even if he did instantly become the subject of much ridicule with the admittedly amusing #SadBatman meme. Much as they try, DC just can't seem to catch a break.

THE MARVEL CINEMATIC UNIVERSE

Arguably the biggest debacle of the last month centred on Marvel Studio's **Ant-Man**. In some surprising news, director Edgar Wright and the studio decided to go their separate ways. The **Cornetto Trilogy** helmer had been working with regular cohort Joe Cornish on **Ant-Man** for the best part of a decade, but it apparently got to the point that, despite several re-drafts of their own, Marvel had two other writers make substantial changes to the script. The changes were such that Wright reportedly felt it best to walk away. Over the subsequent weeks, Marvel Studios frantically searched for a replacement, meeting with the likes of **Anchorman**'s Adam McKay, **Dodgeball**'s Rawson Marshall Thurber, **Zombieland**'s Reuben Fleischer, **Bad Neighbours**' Nicholas Stoller, **Bring it On**'s Peyton Reed, **Goon**'s Michael Dowse, and **Role Models**' David Wain. Several offers were confirmed to have been made, with Marvel being turned down multiple times, but just as we were going to print it was revealed that it will indeed be Peyton Reed that will be filling Edgar Wright's mighty shoes. Despite seemingly being resolved, the whole **Ant-Man** situation certainly got a little messy there for a while. Even now, going forward, many will question the direction that Marvel and Disney are planning to go with Hank Pym. Looking at the names who took meetings, one could be mistaken for thinking that **Ant-Man** may be aiming to skew a hugely comedic slant. In Hank Pym, we have a character that is the focal point of some of the more dark, twisted, complex and emotional stories in the Marvel world. Yes, the MCU is moving forward with Scott Lang as its **Ant-Man**, but here's hoping that the film doesn't overdo it on the comedy. Regardless of this latest fiasco, **Ant-Man**, now complete with Reed at the helm, still has Rudd on board as Lang, Michael Douglas as Pym, and unconfirmed roles for Evangeline Lilly, Patrick Wilson, and Corey Stoll, and it's still scheduled for a release one year from now on July 17th, 2015.

Whereas **Ant-Man** is set to kick off Marvel's **Phase Three** of films, that particular cycle will come to a head with The Avengers taking on Thanos in **The Avengers 3**. Before we get to that, though, the Mad Titan will be making an appearance in this summer's **Guardians of the Galaxy**. Briefly seen flashing a shit-eating grin at the conclusion of **Avengers Assemble**, Thanos' upcoming appearances have called for one of those actual actor-type people to be cast in the role of the purple-skinned big bad. Enter, Josh Brolin. While he will definitely provide the character's voice, the exact specifics of him "playing" the villain are not yet known. What is clear though, is in what capacity the character will appear in James Gunn's **Guardians**. Throughout the film, Thanos will largely be seen as a hologram in communication with Lee Pace's Ronan and Karen Gillan's Nebula. He will physically appear in one scene with Ronan and Nebula, but for this movie he'll mainly play the role of puppeteer, much akin to The Emperor in the **Star Wars** saga, before taking centre-stage in **The Avengers 3**.

In terms of new upcoming MCU movies, it looks like **Doctor Strange** is finally going to get that long-rumoured film. Talk of a Sorcerer Supreme movie has been longstanding, but this month brings near-confirmation that the project is happening. Marvel and Disney are keeping quiet, but director Scott Derrickson took to social media to seemingly confirm he'll be taking on the property. Derrickson is best known for helming **The Exorcism of Emily Rose** and **Sinister**, which may give some indication of what direction this Doc Strange movie may take. In terms of the lead role, recent word was that Oscar-winning Jared Leto was the front-runner, although it's since been claimed that both Benedict Cumberbatch and Tom Hardy are the two names who are in pole position to play the Master of the Mystic Arts. As mentioned, there's nothing official on this one from the powers that be, but Marvel Studios do have July 8th, 2016 and May 5th, 2017 reserved for as-of-yet unconfirmed features. Could the good doctor possibly swoop in and nab one of said dates?

Moving to the small screen, Marvel Studios' Netflix-exclusive **Daredevil** has undergone some changes. Showrunner Drew Goddard has stepped away from the series, seemingly to



In a far cry from Marvel Studios' usual muted marketing campaigns, **GotG** just got the best looking one-sheet we've seen in a long time. And if you're looking at this still puzzled as to why you should get excited about a film featuring a startled Ent, that dude from **Parks and Rec**, a green version of **Avatar**'s Neytiri, some bulbous bloke and a raccoon with a dock-off space gun, turn to page 50 for our complete guide.

focus his attention on Sony's **Amazing Spider-Man** spin-off, **The Sinister Six**, and has been replaced by **Spartacus** creator and fellow **Whedon** alumni, Stephen S. DeKnight (**Buffy the Vampire Slayer**, **Angel**, **Dollhouse**). Goddard will still serve as an executive producer, and his script is still in place for the first two episodes of the 13-episode show. But in even bigger news, the Guardian Devil himself, Matt Murdock, has been cast. Prowling Hell's Kitchen will be 31-year-old Charlie Cox, best known for his leading role in **Stardust** and appearances in **Boardwalk Empire**.

Elsewhere on the small screen, Marvel's **Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.** is to be joined by the long-rumoured Agent Carter. With Hayley Atwell returning as Peggy Carter, the show will initially be set in 1946, detailing the founding of S.H.I.E.L.D. and sees Carter struggling in a male-dominated world while also having to deal with the loss of a certain Sentinel of Liberty. Also returning alongside Atwell will be Dominic Cooper as Howard Stark, father of that genius, billionaire, playboy, philanthropist fella. Confirmed for an initial 8-episode run, the show will air on ABC in the States, being used to fill the mid-season break of Series 2 of **Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.** Yes, after a rocky start, **Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.** has now been confirmed as being renewed for a second series. With Agent Carter scheduled as it is, that essentially means uninterrupted Marvel action for the majority of the year. Hail Hydra! | AP



This October's big-budget reboot of the popular Christian film series depicts a post-rapture world devoid of true believers and artists with entry-level Photoshop skills. Even Cage looks pissed off at having been saddled with yet another in a long line of crappy posters!

STAR TREK 3

Well we didn't see this coming! After previously reporting in these pages that **Attack the Block's** Joe Cornish was close to taking over the **Star Trek** reigns from J.J. Abrams for the upcoming threequel, screenwriter Roberto Orci has swooped in to unexpectedly nab the coveted position himself. We say 'unexpectedly' because it's pretty rare that studios give the keys to a billion dollar franchise to somebody who's never directed a movie before. (You could say it's 'illogical', but that would be a far too predictable gag. So we won't.) Ok, so Orci's had a hand in some of the highest grossing blockbuster franchises over the last ten years (including the likes of **The Amazing Spider-Man**, **Transformers** and the rebooted **Trek** itself), but we still can't help thinking he must have some dirt on a Paramount head honcho or something. Just a theory. Anyway, we'll see if the studio's leap of faith pays off when **Star Trek 3** beams its way into cinemas in time for the franchise's 50th in 2016.

M:I 5

With **Mission: Impossible 5** having been in some form of development for a while now, it appears that the **Ghost Protocol** follow-up has undergone yet another change of writer. Initially, **Iron Man 3's** Drew Pearce penned a script for director Christopher McQuarrie to work from. Pearce has now left the project, with writer Will Staples brought in to replace him. In what may prove to give some indication on the way **Mission: Impossible 5** may go, Staples is best known for his work in videogames, having written the likes of **Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3** and **Need For Speed: Rivals**. Other than the creative team behind it, the return of Jeremy Renner's IMF agent William Brandt and a Christmas Day 2015 (US) release date, we're still in the dark on any further details regarding this next outing for Ethan Hunt, but expect more intel over the coming months. | AP

X-MEN

With **X-Men: Days of Future Past** recently attempting to resolve the various timeline issues of the cinematic X-world, this last month has brought a fair amount of news on future outings for 20th Century Fox's mutants. As **X-Men: Apocalypse** has been long-confirmed to follow **DoFP**, and with a third solo outing in the pipeline for Hugh Jackman's Logan, it's been suggested by the star himself that a sequel to **The Wolverine** could film back-to-back with the next X-flick. The apparent reasoning behind this suggestion is down to the ridiculous shape Jackman has to get into for the part, which is no mean feat at 45 years of age! Just as to how long the Australian actor will continue with the Logan gig is up in the air, though. Initially, Jackman had been saying that a third **Wolverine** solo movie would be his last time as the ol' Canuckhead, a turn that would bring his appearances to a remarkable nine, but the overwhelming success of **DoFP** has seen him have second thoughts about hanging up the claws anytime soon.

Joining **Wolverine** in **Apocalypse** will be Gambit. After months of speculation, Channing Tatum has finally been confirmed as playing Remy LeBeau in the **DoFP** sequel. Not only is he appearing in that movie, but Gambit has also been confirmed to be getting his own solo movie. Although no release date has been put in place for the fan-favourite Cajun's spin-off flick, 20th Century Fox do have July 18th, 2018 already reserved for an unknown Marvel movie.

Just who will be fighting alongside **Wolverine** and Gambit in **X-Men: Apocalypse** remains to be seen. Despite the movie having been previously announced as following the timeline of the "younger" characters introduced in **X-Men: First Class**, writer Simon Kinberg has now suggested that some of the older, original X-Men characters may also be featured. Patrick Stewart, James Marsden and Famke Janssen have recently revealed how they'd love to return as Charles Xavier, Cyclops and Jean Grey, respectively, so it remains to be seen as to whether any of those three get their wish.

Now the classic **Age of Apocalypse** stories from the X-Men comic titles often feature a desolate wasteland of a setting. With **X-Men: Apocalypse** set to use certain elements from those tales, Kinberg has claimed that the movie will pull inspiration from Roland Emmerich-type disaster movies. Given how Emmerich has directed the likes of **Independence Day**, 1998's **Godzilla**, **The Day After Tomorrow**, 2012 and **White House Down**, that should give you an idea of what tone and scope **Apocalypse** may be aiming for.

As for Jeff Wadlow's previously announced **X-Force** movie, that project is now potentially in jeopardy. Rob Liefield, who created the **X-Force** comic series, claims that the movie has stalled as a result of the studio's focus being solely on **Apocalypse**. Oh well, it's not the end of the world. (Sorry.) | AP

JACQUELINE ESS

Actress Lena Headey may be most closely associated with epic fantasy and sci-fi (**Game of Thrones**, **300**, **Dredd**, **Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles**), but now she's adding horror to her growing oeuvre after landing the title role in Clive Barker adaptation **Jacqueline Ess: Her Will and Testament**. The 1985 short story is heading to the big-screen boasting Barker himself as one of the executive producers, with Jovanka Vuckovic making her feature-length directorial debut. Vuckovic was previously best known as a director of short films, most notably the Guillermo del Toro produced **The Captured Bird** in 2012, and her work will next be seen in the upcoming all-female horror anthology **XX**, which we reported on back in TTC 395. Barker's story tells the tale of the eponymous Ms Ess, a woman who acquires the ability to transform peoples' bodies at will, and it made its first appearance in volume two of the author's seminal **Books of Blood** series. Let's just hope this ends up on the right side of the Venn diagram of Barker adaptations. | DC

STAR WARS

Further to April's huge casting announcement, **Episode VII** has officially added the long-rumoured Oscar-winner Lupita Nyong'o to its ensemble. Who the **12 Years a Slave** actress will play still remains under wraps, but theories persist that we're about to be introduced to a descendant of Obi-Wan Kenobi. Another popular

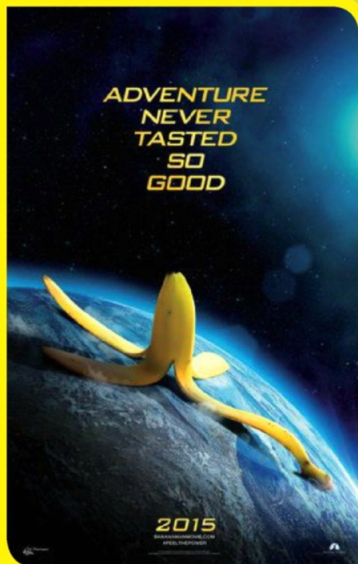
school of thought was that Nyong'o would be bringing the deadly disciple of the dark side Asajj Ventress to life, but Disney insiders have revealed that the company plans, rather disappointingly, to steer clear of any aspect of the saga primarily linked to the prequels and **The Clone Wars**, at least for now. Joining Nyong'o, and coming right out of nowhere, is the addition of Gwendoline Christie, who is a current genre favourite thanks to her portrayal of knight Brienne of Tarth in HBO's **Game of Thrones**. Similarly, Christie's character remains unannounced for the moment, but at a Wookiee-esque six-foot-three we've got money on Chewbacca's wife Malla making her first screen appearance since 1978's **Star Wars Holiday Special!** (Ok, maybe not.)

Lucasfilm also revealed this month who will helm their first two **Star Wars** 'stand-alone' feature films, with Gareth Edwards (**Godzilla**) and Josh Trank (**Chronicle**) landing the coveted positions. How much this will effect Edwards' role in the also-just-greenlit **Godzilla 2** remains to be seen, but since his stand-alone is up first, with a locked December 16th 2016 release date, it's more likely he'll be involved in a producing capacity only - we can't realistically see Legendary Pictures willing to wait that long to get the ball rolling on Big G's next cinematic adventure. Trank's project has yet to be dated, but expect it to follow **Episode VIII** in 2018, meaning his commitment to Fox's troubled **Fantastic Four** reboot shouldn't conflict. Hard to believe that in 15 months we've gone from having no **Star Wars** movies in our future to an already confirmed five, with more to come! As with **Episode VII** itself, fans are still in the dark as to the focus of the stand-alone movies, but scuttlebutt continues to suggest Boba Fett will be first out of the gate, with some kind of Han Solo-centric adventure following that (though TTC remains dubious they'd ever risk casting anybody but Ford in the iconic role, and he's certainly not going to be interested in carrying the film). A curious new addition to these reports includes the possibility of the third stand-alone going under the moniker **Red Five**. Are Disney standing by to make a dedicated X-Wing movie? While you ponder whether that's a good idea or not (opinion is split on this end), we'll leave you with the recently released pic celebrating Mark Hamill's very first appearance at Disneyworld's popular 'Star Wars Weekends' event, noteworthy because is pretty much gives us our first peak at how Luke Skywalker will look in the now shooting **Episode VII**. We'd imagine he'll ditch the check shirt though. And the giant mouse sidekick.



STEPHEN KING

The biggest and perhaps most exciting piece of King-related news this month (as usual there's several projects to talk about) is that Hollywood has finally moved forward somewhat with the long-gestating movie adaptation of **The Stand**. Furthermore, there seems to be genuine desire to ensure fans of the author that the project is in good hands, with director Josh Boone (of



Here's the first teaser poster for the live-action reboot of '80s Brit 'toon **Bananaman** we first brought you news of in TTC 400. What, you thought we were joking?

recent smash hit mega-weepee, **The Fault in Our Stars**), promising an A-list packed, 3-hour, R-rated epic.

In other news, King's beloved story **IT**, first immortalised by the ever popular and creepy Tim Curry 1990 two-part TV film, is slowly inching towards that new two-film adaptation, and has this month changed studios from Warner Bros to a more horror-friendly home at New Line Cinema. It is to be directed by **Sin Nombre's** Cary Fukunaga and is expected to up the violence (no shock from the man who helmed HBO's masterful **True Detective** this year). In addition to the return of King's classic child-'napping clown, there is a potentially interesting film adaptation on the way in King's bondage-gone-horribly-wrong story, **Gerald's Game**. Mike Flanagan (**Oculus**) has reportedly signed up to direct the film once work is complete on nightmare-manifestation movie, **Somnia**. The film is casting now, with shooting scheduled to begin in the autumn, and if done right could prove to be the most psychologically impactful King adaptation since **Misery**.

In addition to the author's bestsellers, his new work is being planned for a big screen makeover as well, in the form of his recently published supernatural short story **Bad Little Kid**. Though only released in Europe this past March, the tale of a mysterious boy causing the deaths of a man's family is currently to be brought to screen by documentarian Laurent Bouzereau, who has documented King's work in the past. Bringing our King round-up to a close, it's also been announced that the TNT network is developing a serialised sequel to 1984's pyrokinesis thriller, **Firestarter**. Known as **The Shop** (named after the story's shady government agency), the series follows up the tale 20 years later and will be scripted by **Supernatural's** Robbie Thompson. It's good to be King! | JB

GOTHAM



Now confirmed for a full 13-episode first season run, **Gotham** debuted its first cast shot this month, with showrunner Bruno Heller also whipping fans into a frenzy by teasing the eventual appearance of the Joker! Heller failed to mention whether the Clown Prince of Crime would be 12-years old like Bruce Wayne and Selina Kyle though, so prepare for disappointment.

STARGATE

Stargate may not be the most popular sci-fi franchise (as **The Simpsons** so aptly put it, it's the third best 'star' series, after **Wars** and **Trek**), but for many it deftly combined the adventure of **Indiana Jones**, Discovery Channel-style archaeology and engaging sci-fi. Though a remake has been rumoured since last year, a re-imagining of the 20-year old franchise is now official, with original creators Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin returning to direct and produce respectively. While studios tend to wait to see how the first film fares as the box office before announcing further sequels, MGM have already confirmed their new **Stargate** will be a trilogy.

As both **Star Trek** and **Star Wars** have recently seen resurgence, it's of little surprise to hear that **Stargate** is coming back also. It's just a miracle J.J. Abrams isn't involved! | DC

ALIEN 5

Ever since the whacked-out, Joss Whedon scripted **Alien Resurrection** left cinemas in 1997, we've heard all manner of **Alien 5** stories from all manner of people. We can now add another person to the list of folk interested in the franchise's next chapter, in the flame-throwing, vest-wearing, Caterpillar P-5000 Work Loader operating heroine herself. While attending the Hero Complex Film Festival in Los Angeles, Sigourney Weaver, when asked about a return to the acid-blooded franchise said, "there is more story left to tell". Considering where the last film left off, with a clone alien hybrid Ripley (we refer you back to "whacked-out") escaping on the Betty, this is somewhat true. Although those longstanding thoughts of an Earth-set sequel seem unlikely, with Weaver saying, "I don't think the *Alien* belongs on Earth popping out of a haystack, which is where I was afraid it was going to go. I feel it should take place in the far reaches of the universe where no one in their right mind would go. There are very few filmmakers that I can think of that I would want to entrust this to."

Of those few, we can count James Cameron out due to **Avatar**'s continuing market domination and Ridley Scott may be too busy building his **Prometheus** universe to get back behind the camera. To that point, new details have burst out of the chest of that project, with a rumoured (and somewhat ambitious) March 2016 release eyed. As Michael Fassbender (who is set to return as android David, or numerous Davids according to various sources) has confirmed, **Prometheus 2** is definitely happening; when that is however, is another story. As for where it will shoot, Scott recently went on a film scouting visit to Australia, which some suggest is part of a deal that

includes shooting his **Blade Runner** sequel there also.

But in spite of all this creeping about for firm details, one thing is for sure, Ridley isn't stopping any time soon, as he's already signed up to helm the Matt Damon sci-fi flick **The Martian** for Fox. In fact, this film may explain Scott's location scouting in Australia because of all these projects mentioned. **The Martian** seems the fastest moving, so perhaps the Land of Oz is where Scott intends to film his Mars-set, stranded astronaut in space movie, which doesn't sound a bit like **Gravity**... it sounds a lot like it. Perhaps Clooney will float past for a cameo, followed by Ripley asking for directions, thus tying up one huge universe. Then again, maybe not. | JB

AND FINALLY...

Did you, like us, start to panic when the rumours hit earlier this year that Bradley Cooper was the frontrunner to replace Harrison Ford in future **Indiana Jones** movies? Well, talk of an Indy reboot is back doing the rounds again, but this time it's even scarier, with new owners Disney said to be eyeing **Twilight**'s Robert Pattinson for the role. Gulp.

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Other utterly unwanted reboots making the news this month include **Death Wish** (Mexican filmmaker Gerardo Naranjo attached), **Cliffhanger** (newcomer Joe Gzamm penning the screenplay), **Kickboxer** (UFC-turned-MCU stars Dave Bautista and Georges St. Pierre sign as leads) and **Starship Troopers** (found a home at Skydance Productions, they of the new **Terminator** trilogy). This brings TTC 402's reboot tally to a depressing 14 mentioned projects!

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The Flintstones are heading back to the big screen too, but rather than being a yabba-dabba-do-over, this new incarnation will see the characters back in their natural animated form. The unlikely team behind the project are comedy partners Adam McKay and Will Ferrell. At least this will mean we'll now be completely spared Seth MacFarlane's reinvention that he was threatening back in 2011!

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Ghostbusters news! Don't worry, this isn't yet another tedious rumour about the increasingly unlikely part 3 (the more eagle-eyed amongst you will have already noticed we actually hid that in the **Marvel** story), this is regarding its 30th Anniversary, which will see the classic film head back to cinemas in August for one day only (in the US at least), before getting a brand new Blu-ray set in September, which will include **Ghostbusters II** for the very first time on the format.

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While Legendary Pictures' **Godzilla** took the US box office by storm, the studio's first entry into kaiju canon, 2013's **Pacific Rim**, mysteriously failed to capture the zeitgeist in the same way. And that had robots in it too! And Thundercloud Formations! Pleasedly, it looks like the flick made enough coin internationally and on home video to justify a sequel, and Guillermo del Toro has revealed he's already hard at work co-writing it with Zak Penn (**Alphas**). Wonder if they can persuade **Godzilla** to do a walk-on, and add some star power?

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Joining **Cinderella** and **The Jungle Book**, Disney have added **Beauty and the Beast** to the growing list of live-action adapts of their animated classics, and have tapped **Twilight**'s Bill Condon to direct. With **One Hundred and One Dalmatians**, **Alice in Wonderland** and the recent **Maleficent** proving monster hits, don't expect the studio to stop mining their back catalogue for some time to come. Which is fine by us, because one day that means we'll get a new version of **Basil the Great Mouse Detective**!

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James Cameron has revealed that his **Avatar** theme park will go by the name of **Pandora: The Land of Avatar**. With the attraction due to open some time in 2017, at least this thing means that if Sam Worthington's career carries on as it's been going lately, he's always guaranteed a job ripping tickets.

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...In other theme park news, Lionsgate are developing one based on **The Hunger Games**. Hang on, aren't those movies about kids being forced to fight to the death? That's going to make for some interesting school trips.

TTC 402 stories by KRIS HEYS, ANDREW POLLARD, JACK BOTTOMLEY and DOMINIC CUTHBERT. Edited by KRIS HEYS.

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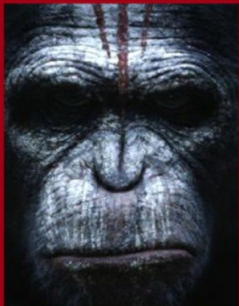
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HAIR APPARENT

BY
ANDREW POLLARD



DAWN OF THE
PLANET
OF THE
APES



After varying levels of success on the big and small screen over the decades, an eighth PLANET OF THE APES movie is now upon us. STARBURST takes a break from flinging its own faeces to bring you a complete guide to 20th Century Fox's eagerly awaited sequel, DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE APES...

If we're perfectly honest, 2011's *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* took us by surprise. Like many, we were fully expecting another one of those pointless, shiny Hollywood redo efforts that are all style and no substance. What we got was a thoughtful, delicate and emotive film that gave a great reintroduction to the *Planet of the Apes* series. Fast-forward three years and here we all are, excitedly awaiting the sequel to Rupert Wyatt's *Rise*.

To get you up to speed, this sequel sees Wyatt replaced in the director's chair by Matt Reeves, best known for helming *Cloverfield* and *Let Me In*. Key to the 2011 film's success was a stellar script that made the oft-hokey premise palatable. To certain casual cineastes, the mere mention of *Planet of the Apes* just throws up lax notions of people in shoddy-looking rubber masks riding horseback through '60s and '70s desert landscapes. Or even worse, of Tim Burton's Mark Wahlberg-starring 2001 remake. So it garnered great appreciation from all genre fans out there when Rick Jaffa and Amanda Silver constructed a plot and script for *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* that was concise, serious, respectful and that firmly tugged at the heartstrings. As a result, despite Rupert Wyatt eventually walking away from another chance to ape around, it's reassuring to see Jaffa and Silver both back on writing duties for Matt Reeves' *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, and they've been joined by Mark Bomback (*The Wolverine*) and Scott Z. Burns (*Contagion*) on that front. It's also interesting to see that Reeves has already agreed to return for a further *Apes* movie after *Dawn*, suggesting that there's a firm, long-term plan in mind for those damn, dirty apes. But before we get consumed with what may or may not happen in a third of these new *Planet of the Apes* movies, let's delve deeper into the subject of the day: *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*.

THE COMING OF A NEW DAWN

As *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* came to a close, a viral pandemic was sweeping the globe. Here we pick things up a decade later. With the planet torn to shreds, man is the minority and apes are in the ascendancy. Again, at the top of the tree, we find Caesar (mo-capped by the returning Andy Serkis) as a pivotal point of the *Apes* story. Whereas the 2011 *Rise* had James Franco's Will as its key human element, this time around we have some different faces involved. As to what happened to Will, it's presumed that he perished during the early stages of the virus, but there's also talk of a possible cameo from Franco. Whether that means just through *Rise* footage, we'll have to wait and see.

Stepping into Franco's shoes are *Zero Dark Thirty*'s Jason Clarke and the always-fantastic Gary Oldman. With the world a much different place than it was in *Rise*, this time out the human outlook is drastically changed. As the world is essentially being run by apes with enhanced intelligence, there seems to be two different human stances on show in *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*. First up, we have Jason Clarke's Malcolm, a survivor of the ALZ-113 virus of the first movie and somebody who is part of a small group of survivors who have struck up some form of bond with Caesar and his cohorts. On the other side of the fence, though, we find Oldman's Dreyfus. As somebody who has lost his sons to the virus in question, Dreyfus heads up a group of human survivors who seek revenge on the apes and want them all dead. Making up the rest of the principal human characters are Keri Russell (*Mission: Impossible III*), Jocko Sims (*The Last Ship*), Kirk Acevedo (*The Walking Dead*), Kevin Rankin (*Breaking Bad*), J.D. Evermore (*True Detective*), Keir O'Donnell





(Sons of Anarchy), and Kodi Smit-McPhee (The Road) as Malcom's teenage son, Alexander.

From the footage that's been released so far, it appears that the virus has caused division amongst the human survivors, largely due to the opposing views of the likes of Malcolm and Dreyfus. This is alluded to in some of the recent promos for the film, where Oldman's character proclaims, "We've been through hell together. We spent four years fighting that virus and then another four fighting each other." As is ever the case, it appears that man is struggling to coexist with fellow man, let alone the ever-increasing numbers of simians.

MONKEYING AROUND



We touched on it earlier, but Andy Serkis' return as Caesar was one of the first things to be announced once this sequel was given the green light. It's at the stage in Hollywood and beyond now, where if you need some sort of creature that requires moc-capping, Serkis is the go-to guy. After rising to prominence as Gollum in Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, the actor did wonders with the role of Caesar in Rupert Wyatt's *Apes* film. Whilst Caesar was the top dog (or ape) in that film, this time out, he's joined by some pals.



Rise brought us appearances from apes other than Caesar, but this time out there's a lot more to be done. These apes are more sophisticated than their predecessors and the preview footage seen so far even touches upon some form of education within the creatures at this stage. In fact, we've even seen a glimpse of the old "Ape shall not kill Ape" adage in the most recent trailers for the movie, which winks nicely at *Apes* movies of yesteryear. Playing a predominant role in the ape community here is Judy Greer as Cornelia, a love-interest of sorts for Caesar. The pair also have a teenage son, River, played by Nick Thurston. Elsewhere, the key ape roles are performed by prolific movement choreographer Terry Notary as Rocket, award-winning singer/actor Larramie Doc Shaw as Ash, a returning Karin Konoval as Maurice, and the brilliant Toby Kebbell (*Dead Man's Shoes*) as Koba.

Though it takes place many years on from *Rise*, don't expect the eloquent apes of the initial movies and TV series or the over-the-top, almost-caricature primates of Tim Burton's film. *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* will bring apes that have a form of understanding of the human language and that, more worryingly, understand the concept of war. In a further nod

to the apes of years gone by, we'll also be getting some simians on horseback, presumably as they go to





MATT REEVES

[DIRECTOR]

"I wanted to be an ape!"

On his passion for the *Planet of the Apes* franchise...

As a kid I was obsessed with *Star Wars*. But way before that, I was obsessed with *Planet of the Apes*. I wanted to be an ape! I was always upset because you could buy a mask, but the mouth wouldn't open and close the way that John Chambers' makeup and prosthetics did. Then when I saw *Rise* I felt like, wow... All those years I'd wanted to be an ape, but watching *Rise* really made me an ape. And the way that that happened was the way that Rupert [Wyatt] and Andy [Serkis] and Weta did it, which was to make you completely connect with who Caesar was. I wasn't an ape physically, I was an ape emotionally. And to me, that was the thing that I really wanted to carry forward and just to honour what they had done and to carry it on into a new story.

On setting the film a decade later...

What was important to me was that the story not jump too far in a certain way from where things were from *Rise* because in that, when Andy says "No", it was so startling, it blew me away. And I think what was exciting about it to me was watching the apes learn how to speak, watching all that happen. Obviously there's only three, four words in the first movie – we wanted this to be somewhere along the continuum towards the '68 movie where, of course, they're fully conversant. And so that's really what it's about and one of the things we did at the beginning was spend time exploring exactly that. Even though the movie deals with the viral apocalypse that comes at the end of the last film, to me [Dawn] isn't a post-apocalyptic movie. What it is a story that starts in the world of apes. And you see what they've built and you see this primitive yet majestic kingdom and you see a family and you see they're coming into being and then they are thinking and wondering in this new creation, 'are the humans gone?' because it's all from their point of view. And then, not too long into the story, they realise that there are still humans and it becomes a question of survival. That's what the story comes to be about: how can these two populations coexist and will it lead to violence?

On whether we can expect more references to past *Apes* movies...

There are certain things within the canon, I guess you could almost consider them commandments, that [Dawn] does reference. But our references are very much trying to create a context for the world that [Caesar] leads.

On learning to love your inner simian...

We spent time with Andy and Ted Notary, who is our movement specialist. He's incredible. They showed me what it is to be an ape. We had a whole training camp where the actors got together and one of the things we tried to do, because this story is so much about this family of apes, one of the things that Andy wanted us to do was for us all to get together and do rehearsals in ape character and to create what this sort of world felt like – what articulation was like; language!

battle with the humans that oppose their dominance. The earliest of promo images for this latest *Apes* effort gave us some stark images of Caesar and chums decked out in what appears to be war paint and riding on horseback, but certain footage also depicts them as being armed to the teeth. Could it be that this new generation of apes led by Caesar are inching closer to the militaristic society that we've seen in the original run of *Apes* movies and the 1974 TV series?

MAN OR BEAST?

So we've established the key human characters, we've established the key simian element, and we've established that things appear like they'll be coming to a bloody conclusion as man looks to spank the monkey. But just who will be in the right? It seems as if Jason Clarke's Malcolm will become the hero-to-be, looking to keep matters peaceful between the two species. Despite Malcolm's best efforts to maintain a truce with Caesar, footage of Gary Oldman's Dreyfus firing a machine gun suggests that it will be he, and his group of survivors, that will be standing on the dark side here.

In fairness to the Dreyfus character, and likely in testament to the scripting of the movie, it doesn't appear as if anybody will be thoroughly b-b-bad to the bone. Yes, Dreyfus wants to go to war with the primates and to wipe them out, but this is because he's lost loved ones at the hands of the super virus – for which he places the blame firmly at the door of the apes. Whilst it seems he'll be gunning for simian bloodshed, it does at least appear that he will be a "villain" with an understandable angle to his outlook. But then that throws up the age-old question of whether man can ever truly overcome his animalistic instincts of procreation, violence and dominance. Maybe the philosophical debate on how far man is removed from the apparent beasts it places itself above is a little heavy for a light-and-breezy preview of a summer blockbuster. So we digress...

We can only hope that Matt Reeves' *Dawn* lives up to the excellent return to form that 2011's *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* brought with it. The foundations are there, as laid in said *Rise*, the on-screen talent is certainly there, with the likes of Serkis, Oldman, Clarke, and Greer all more than capable of holding their own; the key crew behind the film seem to have done wonders with the franchise so far, and it looks as if we're about to see the start of full-on war between man and ape. Oldman's Dreyfus and Clarke's Malcolm, despite having differing opinions, will be working together to try and rebuild human society as we know it. Whether they achieve even the slightest amount of success is unknown at this point, as is the direction that a third film in this revamped *Apes* series will take.

What we do know is that it looks bleak for mankind at this point in the *Apes* story. In a desolate world ravaged by a killer virus, man has to forage for food, for shelter, for warmth, and for safety. To flip things over, the apes can manage just fine in this new world that



we find the movie set in. Adding further to the concerns of both sides are the ever-familiar issues of prejudice that the whole *Planet of the Apes* franchise is soaked in. After becoming the clear dominant species, how will the apes and their potential egos see the small, minor threat of mankind? Will the humans be seen as second class citizens and as a lesser species? We guess it depends how deep down that road this modern take on the *Apes* saga is looking to go. Safe to say, that's definitely an easily-accessible route for the series to go should it so choose. Then again, in a world where everything is instant and seemingly attached to a phone or tablet, would the casual cinema-goer really be drawn in by serious, thought-provoking and meaningful themes such as pride, prejudice and compromise? We certainly would. For those Facebook-obsessed others (by the way, be sure to search for STARBURST Magazine on Mark Zuckerberg's social media monster), maybe not so much so.

Given how that's a relatively comprehensive summary of what we can expect to see in this summer's *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, what lies ahead for this refreshed saga? With Matt Reeves already confirmed for a follow-up to *Dawn*, we'd like to think that it means there's a long-term plan in place for Caesar et al, even if we humans don't make it. In this already-confirmed threequel, should we expect to see the story follow the familiar narrative of apes ruling the world and near-enough wiping out mankind, or could it be that 20th Century Fox and Reeves will throw a curveball into this revitalised franchise? Perhaps we might even eventually find out what happened to those astronauts that were briefly referenced as being "lost in space" aboard their space vessel, *Icarus* (sound familiar?), in *Rise*. Whatever route they decide to take, the tone, direction, warmth and sincerity of 2011's film has given us a lot of faith in where this series is heading. We'd hedge our bets that it likely won't end well for mankind – at least not yet – but it seems we'll be in for an interesting ride.

With the human race dwindling in numbers, fighting amongst themselves, fighting the ape menace, and trying its best to rebuild any form of inhabitable world for itself, we're drawn to the wise words of a certain stoner prophet named Jay: "In a world gone mad, we will not spank the monkey, but the monkey will spank us." – Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back (2001).



DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE APES
swings into UK cinemas July 17th.



ANDY SERKIS [STAR]

"It is very much about Caesar becoming a good leader and not throwing away everything that he has grown up with as a human being."

On Caesar...

I'll never forget reading the [*Rise*] script for the first time and seeing the trajectory of Caesar, thinking 'what an amazing character' and then realising, of course, 'it's an ape! Take that away and you'd still have an amazing character who's on a phenomenal journey, but here was this creature who was going through... and what I believe people responded to... all these recognisable human emotions; these feelings of being rejected and then finding his people. Because of the way Caesar was brought up in the world and brought up by human beings, for me he was always an outsider - there was a sense of not knowing who he was. He was brought up by a human being and he believed himself in many ways to be [one] - he had many human attributes, learnt human belief systems through his father [James Franco], who he believed to be a good man.

On the character's Dawn arc...

Going through into this next stage, it is very much about Caesar becoming a good leader and not throwing away everything that he has grown up with as a human being. So in a sense he's finding his inner ape, by galvanising this 2000-strong group of orangutans and chimps and gorillas, but he's also trying to evaluate, on a daily basis, and not become an absolute leader but be open and empathetic. He's also now a father; he has a teenage son, a wife, an infant baby and a council of apes.

On the apes' evolving language skills...

Throughout the course of the movie we see [apes] learning to communicate, and not just learning to communicate with words, but with sign language that Caesar was taught as an infant. [It's] become a unifying way of speaking with the other apes. [There's] also human words that he's beginning to be able to use. And then all the other apes, too, are learning to deal with gestures and ape vocalisations, and of course all the younger apes that are growing up in the society are learning to speak better and faster than their parents. So it's a very rich and complex world that Caesar exists in.





THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

by John Knott

We examine Pierre Boule's legendary simian satire and discover LA PLANÈTE DES SINGES is a lot darker than you might have thought...

When you recall that iconic Statue of Liberty moment in *Planet of the Apes* (1968), only one phrase springs to mind. Yep, it's "Vive la France!" every time. What? You were thinking of something else? Well call us odd [You're odd! – Ed] but what could be more Gallic? After all, as every schoolboy knows, France is the birthplace of both Lady Liberty and Planet of the Apes.

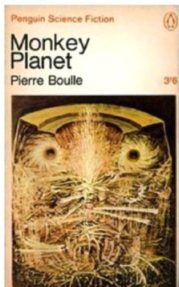
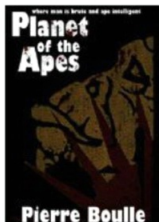
The mighty Rod Serling may have written the movie's screenplay but the original story actually comes from French author Pierre Boule's 1963 novel *La Planète des singes*, or *Monkey Planet* if you prefer (and you can jolly well look up the 1870s origin of Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi's most famous sculpture yourself). Boule had been working in Malaysia at the outbreak of the Second World War and ended up as a spy in China, Burma, and Indochina before the Vichy French

(the pro-Nazis who controlled unoccupied France after its surrender) captured him on the Mekong River in 1943. He was given a life sentence of hard labour but escaped the following year and finished the war working for the British in India before his eventual return to Paris. But it was his experiences in captivity that are supposed to have inspired his two most famous works. In 1952 he published *Le Pont de la rivière Kwaï* (or *Bridge on the River Kwai* – yes, we at STARBURST like to up your pub-quiz knowledge) in which the influence of his wartime experiences were easy to see. However, with those monkeys, it was less obvious.

If you've not read it then *La Planète* is worth a go even if the translation has rather more use of the word

"hullabaloo" than one suspects Boule intended. It is also a book that could be regarded as rather more controversial than its reputation would suggest. Well maybe that's just our opinion...

Basically it follows roughly the same plot as the film (right down to the ape caste system, the hunting trophy scene, and the human doll) with a couple of important differences. Firstly, these apes were technologically advanced. In the end that doesn't really make too much difference to the story and the only reason the film had the early-industrial setting (in which the apes appear not to have a steam engine, can't make straight doors or iron bars but have managed a



rather spiffy-looking rifle) was to keep the budget down; Serling had originally intended a similar technological level to the novel. But an important difference (big spoiler in the unlikely event you know nothing of POTAs) is that this was *not* Earth, but the planet *Soror*. In fact, the whole post-apocalyptic element you might be familiar with was entirely absent. So if you read anywhere that Boule was tapping into Cold War fears of Armageddon (and we're certainly seen that written) then you'll probably find that's something by someone who hasn't actually read it. Shocking, but there it is. There's no Statue of Liberty moment (that was a piece of Serling-genius) and the twist-ending has more in common with Tim Burton's much maligned re-imagined version.

One of the strengths of the 1968 movie was the fact that the exact circumstances of the rise of the apes was left to your imagination. Fans of the rest of the franchise, in which the story is told in painstaking detail and includes a bit of time travel (always a dodgy premise for this kind of thing), are probably not going to agree with this assertion but there is something rather terrifying in not knowing exactly how this "mad house" came about. Sure, we blew it up (God damn us all to hell), but that doesn't quite explain how we forgot how to talk and let the apes take over; that's just something you're left to wonder about. But Boule really goes for it in his novel with a bit of human vivisection and some glimpses into the past via some rather convenient "racial memory" nonsense. Now this could have been a weakness in the story but the way in which apes who had been taught to speak gradually change from servants into rebels while the humans just lie down and take it is genuinely chilling. The fact that it doesn't involve a humanity-bothering cataclysm just makes the Fall of Man all the more horrifying.

But what's all this got to do with Boule's experiences as a POW? Well on one hand

there's clearly an exploration of man's reaction to captivity. Ulysses, the human hero, is stoic at the hands of the apes, much like Taylor (Charlton Heston) in the movie. But his companion, the apparently more intelligent Professor Antelle, regresses to the animal state of Soror's native humans with whom they share their imprisonment. While Antelle's reaction is disturbing enough, there was also, perhaps, something even darker to all this.

La Planète is essentially about a world turned upside down. The apes' and humans' roles are entirely reversed; even down to the apes carrying out experiments on the humans just as we have done on with apes on Earth. It's often said that this was just Boule making a comment on our relationship with animals. But, without boring you all with a history lesson [I bet he does – Ed], it's important to understand the mindset of a European colonial at the time of Boule's WWII experiences. Details of his actual imprisonment are sketchy but even though he was captured by his Vichy countrymen, it's important to remember that control of parts of Indochina, including Saigon where Boule was imprisoned, had been ceded to the Japanese shortly after France's European defeat (*And he's off – Ed*). In other words, Boule was as much a prisoner of the Japanese as he was the Vichy and it's perfectly possible that much of his incarceration was with the Japanese. In fact, the Japanese (who had been at war with China since 1937) were about to dominate South East Asia much as European Imperialists of various nations had been doing before the war. It wasn't just the French; the Dutch were defeated in Indonesia, the Americans removed from the Philippines and no one was quite so humiliated as the British at Singapore. The early years of the Pacific war, partly because of the overstretched resources of their far-flung empires but also

through complacency and a belief in their own superiority. These westerners had regarded the Japanese (and indeed Asians in general) as weaker than them and yet they were now the masters. When Boule's account of the end of human dominance reads "Now they hold the town. We sleep; we are incapable of organising ourselves for resistance." he seems to be speaking of the entire western experience at the hands of the Japanese up until the Battle of Midway. It's uncomfortable for our modern sensibilities but ultimately Boule's apes were the Japanese.

That's not to say that Boule was a racist; certainly not by the standards of his day. After all, *La Planète* is a satire. We are supposed to be horrified by the apes' treatment of the humans and, therefore, question our own treatment of those we regard as our inferiors because, just maybe, the boot could be on the other foot. In other words, who were we to be regarding anyone as inferior? But the Japanese-as-ape idea is not something that sits well with the 21st century reader. In fact, it's something that a lot of analyses of the text tend to skip over, ignore or reject altogether. If you've read it, you probably have your own opinion and it might well be a different interpretation. But, nevertheless, there's probably no way *La Planète* could get written today (if only because the war in the Pacific is no longer a recent memory) and that's probably a good thing.

La Planète des singes is an effective and horrifying satire even if one can't help thinking that Serling's screenplay was just that little bit cleverer than Boule's novel. On the other hand, it was Boule's idea so credit where it's due. Ultimately, if you're a POTAs fan (or even if you're not) give it a read but remember that, like most art, it's very much a product of its time.



Ape-Ocalypse Now

by Jon Towlson



When producer Arthur P. Jacobs bought the rights to Pierre Boulle's novel *MONKEY PLANET* in 1963, little did he know it would take him five years to bring it to the screen. But when the original *PLANET OF THE APES* finally hit cinemas in 1968, audiences went bananas, and one of the most successful sci-fi franchises of all time was born. Join us as we take an in-depth look back at that first Apes saga...

PLANET OF THE APES



"He'd even designed and built Spock's ears in *Star Trek*, but transforming actors into apes was his biggest challenge."

You maniacs! You blew it up! Damn you! Damn you all to hell!" Who can forget the astonishing ending of the original *Planet of the Apes* (1968), and those words screamed by Charlton Heston as the camera lingers on the hulking ruins of the Statue of Liberty, only its upper torso, head and torch remaining? For those of us introduced to the world of the Apes on television in the 1970s, the film's ending – unremitting in its bleakness – remains indelibly etched in our consciousness. And the sequels that followed were no less downbeat. Indeed it's hard to imagine such a grimly apocalyptic movie series as the original Apes films even existing today (save perhaps Fox's rebooted instalments in the saga). But the five original Apes movies, which tell the story of how apes evolved from man, constitute one of the most successful sci-fi franchises of all time, striking a deep chord with both audiences and reviewers alike. Critics read all kinds of social comment in the films, such as relating them to the turbulent era of late 1960s/early 1970s America: racial strife, anti-war sentiment, clashes between youth and authority. And for audiences around the world, seeing civilisation as we know it come to an end seemed to have a strangely cathartic effect.

The original Apes series came into being when producer Arthur P. Jacobs bought the rights to Pierre Boulle's novel *La Planète des singes* in 1965. Jacobs started as an office boy at MGM before becoming a movie publicist. His first film as producer was *What A Way To Go* (1964) starring Paul Newman and Shirley MacLaine. Jacobs was about to produce *Dr. Doolittle* (1967) for Fox when he came across Boulle's novel in gallery form and went, well, ape, over this very different kind of talking animal. He commissioned a screenplay from *Twilight Zone* creator Rod Serling and took the project to Richard Zanuck, the then head of 20th Century Fox. Zanuck turned him down flat. In fact, it would take Jacobs another five years to get *Planet of the Apes* made. The concept of talking monkeys was deemed far too preposterous for a movie.

Somewhere along the line, Jacobs realised he needed a star to give him leverage. He approached Charlton Heston, biblical actor of yore who had become immortalised as *Ben Hur* in 1959. Heston saw the possibilities of the project and brought on board heavyweight epic director Franklin J. Schaffner (*Patton*, 1970, *Papillon*, 1973, *Boys from Brazil*, 1978). Jacobs had pitched *Planet of the Apes* to every major studio – and all turned him down – when Zanuck eventually came back to bankroll the project.

But even Zanuck had his reservations. What had concerned everyone right from the start was the problem of how to make the ape make-up look believable. Enter make-up artist supremo John Chambers.

Chambers, who would go on to win an Oscar for his work on *Planet of the Apes*, had been a hospital consultant specialising in dentistry, making prosthetic appliances for disfigured war veterans before breaking into the movies in the early '60s. He worked on TV shows like *The Outer Limits*, *The Munsters* and *Lost in Space*. He'd even designed and built Spock's ears in *Star Trek*, but transforming actors into apes was his biggest challenge. Eventually he designed a three piece appliance made out of latex, consisting of nose and forehead (one piece), jaw and wig, individually tailored to each cast member. The makeup costs would eventually amount to \$1 million dollars of the film's overall \$5.8 million budget.

Even with the make-up problem solved, Zanuck was still wary and ordered Jacobs to slash costs on the production: Fox was in financial difficulties after the failure of several big movies at the box office, including Jacobs' *Dr. Doolittle*. Feeling the pressure, Jacobs was forced to rethink the whole concept, and it was Schaffner who suggested changing the highly advanced

BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES



technological Apes society in Serling's draft (the Apes even had flying cars!) to the much more primitive, rustic one we know and love in the movie today. Bond scribe and producer Michael G. Wilson was brought in to make the budget-saving rewrite, and after *Fantastic Voyage* (1967) became an unexpected hit for Fox, and 2001: *A Space Odyssey* (1968) made sci-fi suddenly respectable, *Planet of the Apes* was finally greenlit.

In the first film, Taylor (Heston) captains an interstellar exploration team whose ship crash lands on a seemingly barren Earth-like planet. After being captured by gorillas that kill his fellow astronauts, Taylor realises he has entered a world where evolution has gone backwards: apes talk and humans are mute. Only the liberal minded chimpanzee doctors Cornelius (Roddy McDowell) and his wife, Zira (Kim Hunter), show any compassion for his plight, while Dr Zaius (Maurice Evans), the head of the Ape Assembly, tries to cover up his existence for fear that it might lead to an unearthing of the truth about the ape evolution.

The public went bananas for *Planet of the Apes*, and it became a huge box-office smash, going on to make \$32.6 million in ticket sales. Jerry Goldsmith won an Oscar nomination for his music score and Chambers won an honorary Oscar for Outstanding Make-Up Achievement. The critics were generally positive, immediately picking up on the film's social commentary. "*Planet of the Apes* is an anti-war film and a science fiction liberal tract", pronounced Renata Adler of *The New York Times*, before adding, "It's no good at all, but fun, at moments, to watch." Roger Ebert was less equivocal: "much better than I expected it to be. It is quickly paced, completely entertaining, and its philosophical pretensions don't get in the way." Even the

notoriously difficult to please Pauline Kael called it "one of the best science-fiction fantasies ever to come out of Hollywood" (although she did then go on to say, "That doesn't mean it's art").

With *Planet of the Apes* going Bonzo at the box office, Zanuck immediately pressured Jacobs into a sequel. Jacobs needed some persuasion (he'd never planned a series and indeed several times down the years after *Planet of the Apes* announced that each successive film in the franchise would be the last); how could he possibly go beyond the original film's apocalyptic conclusion? Going back to Boule and Serling, Jacobs commissioned a number of proposals from both writers but, dissatisfied, ended up rejecting them all. He needed a visual shock to rival that of the original – but what? In desperation Jacobs turned to Manchester-born veteran British screenwriter Paul Dehn, best known for *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1964) and *Goldfinger* (co-written with Richard Maibaum, 1965). Just as he had helped to solidify the Bond formula with *Goldfinger*, Dehn nailed the story for *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* and for all of the subsequent sequels. Many of the franchise's most ingenious ideas – like the time loop structure, for example – were Dehn's. For *Beneath*, he came up with the idea of showing the whole of New York City buried underground and run by mutant survivors of a nuclear holocaust. And he managed to top the apocalyptic finale of the previous film by ending *Beneath* (spoiler alert!) with the detonation of an Alpha-Omega doomsday bomb that destroys the entire planet!

With script for the sequel finally in hand, Jacobs went in search of a director (Schaffner was, by then, busy on *Patton* and had to bow out of the sequel), eventually settling on Ted Post, a TV

director who had broken into features directing his *Rawhide* buddy Clint Eastwood in *Hang 'Em High* (1968), before scoring several hits and eventually returning to TV in the '80s. Post had started out in theatre, and had even directed Bela Lugosi in summer stock as *Dracula* in 1948; he also went on to make the cult oddity, *The Baby* (1973), one of the most genuinely unsettling horror films of the 1970s. Post came on board *Beneath* on the proviso that Heston again starred. Heston agreed to appear – but only briefly, and wanted to be killed off in the opening scene. Eventually, Zanuck stepped in, persuading Heston that the story would be better served if he mysteriously *disappeared* in the opening scene and did not reappear again until the final scene to take his revenge on humanity by detonating the Alpha-Omega weapon.

Instead, Heston look-alike, James Franciscus, takes the lead as Brent, a fellow space traveller sent to investigate the disappearance of Taylor's ship. Like his predecessor, Brent is captured by apes and manages to escape, only to find himself stumbling into the Forbidden Zone and into the clutches of the underground mutants. Maurice Evans reprised his role as the stoical Dr. Zaius, and Kim Hunter returned as Zira. McDowell, however, was busy in England directing his first movie (*The Ballad of Tom Lin*, 1970). So sound-alike David Watson was brought in as Cornelius.

"Lacks the moral complexity and intellectual stimulation of its predecessor" the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* opined on the film's release in June 1970. Critical reaction to the first sequel was mixed, but the public's response was positive and *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* went on to make \$14 million at the box office, recouping its production cost four times over.

ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES

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"After the almost overwhelming nihilism of Beneath, Jacobs and director Don Taylor decided on a lighter tone for the next sequel."

Scenes in *Beneath* depicted anti-violence demonstrations held by the peace loving chimpanzees wielding slogan daubed placards ("Wage Peace Not War"), while the war-mongering gorillas led by General Ursus (James Gregory) mount a campaign to storm the Forbidden Zone and the progressive minded Cornelius and Zira continue to clash with the arch-conservative Dr. Zaius. The film reflects the mood of America in the Vietnam era, a time when the younger generation rebelled and police fired live bullets at student demonstrators in university campuses. The film ends in a frenzy of violence that sees Brent and Taylor mown down in a rain of machine gun fire, and even the mute flower-child, Nova (Linda Harrison) is shot dead by the rampaging Gorilla army.

After the almost overwhelming nihilism of *Beneath*, Jacobs and director Don Taylor decided on a lighter tone for the next sequel. There was of course also the thorny issue of how to carry on the series having destroyed all the characters and the entire planet to boot. It was Dehn who came up with the solution. In *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* (1971), Cornelius and Zira manage to repair Taylor's spaceship and take a reverse trajectory through the time warp back to Earth in 1973. There, after the initial shock of their appearance wears off, they are treated like celebrities by the media until the authorities begin to realise the implications when Zira becomes pregnant. Then the two chimpanzees are forced to become fugitives as the military tries to hunt them down before they can trigger the end of civilisation as humans know it.

Despite its small budget and TV movie appearance, *Escape* is the best of the Apes sequels. It's funny, moving and surreal in turns, and who can forget Cornelius's classic line when asked by the President of the Committee of Inquiry





CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES



"The race relations subtext of the previous films would come to the fore in *Conquest*, as Dehn wrote in sequences of enslaved apes rioting in the streets, reflecting the wave of race riots that had spread through the United States the previous decade."

whether he, like his wife Zira, can talk. "Only when she lets me," is the deadpan reply, much to the amusement and delight of the attending journalists. The film resonates as an allegory on race relations in America: the chimpanzees are viewed like illegal 'immigrants' into the United States and a threat to the American Way. But it also has much to say about the then-burgeoning second wave feminist movement. Zira emerges as a strong, intelligent and politicised female who puts the men to shame. The film was well received by the critics and public alike. It made \$12.3 million at the box office, and reviewers, like Frederick S. Clarke (Cinefantastique), started to view the saga as a unified body of work, calling it "the first epic of filmed science fiction".

Dehn was called upon to script the third sequel, which would become

known as *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* (1972). The race relations subtext of the previous films would come to the fore in *Conquest*, as Dehn wrote in sequences of enslaved apes rioting in the streets, reflecting the wave of race riots that had spread through the United States the previous decade. Set in 1991, Zira's baby, the only surviving ape from *Escape*, has now grown to full chimpanzee and has been named Caesar. Emerging from hiding in a circus he is shocked to find society has become a virtual police state in which his fellow simians are imported from Africa by the boatload to be used as slaves. Caesar (Roddy McDowell) leads the apes in an uprising that climaxes in a pitched battle between the apes and armed baton-wielding police, with the apes emerging victorious. Seizing control from the human Governor, Caesar proclaims apes the dominator of man, and ends the film with the words, "tonight we have seen the birth of the planet of the apes." Thus *Conquest* took the saga full circle, depicting the moment of ape revolution on Earth.

Directed by the two-fisted veteran J. Lee Thompson (*The Guns of Navarone*, 1961, *Cape Fear*, 1962), *Conquest* returns to the hard edge approach of the original 1968 film. Indeed, Thompson had been involved in the franchise from the very beginning, having directed Jacobs' first feature, *What A Way To Go*, but other commitments had prevented him from directing *Planet* or the first two sequels. Thompson would also direct the fifth and

BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES



final entry in the original saga, 1973's *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*.

"Two civilizations battle for the right to inherit what's left of the Earth". So headlines the front page of the San Simian Gazette (geddit?), a mock-up newspaper given out in cinemas as publicity for *Battle*. The film sees the survivors of the apocalypse (it is revealed that humans eventually resorted to nuclear weapons to try to quell the ape uprising of *Conquest*), both ape and human, engaged in a final battle for the planet. Caesar must face down a potential ape rebellion of gorillas led by General Aldo (Claude Akins) while also trying to fight off one last attempt by mutant humans to regain control. Although *Battle* has its moments, on the whole it feels like one sequel too many. McDowell again excels as Caesar, son of Cornelius, and there is sterling support by a stellar cast that includes legendary director John Huston, Lew Ayres, equally legendary actor and star of the classic *All Quiet on the Western Front*, with a supporting turn by Paul Williams (who the following year would memorably star in and provide the songs for the cult horror musical *Phantom of the Paradise*); even ape-tastic director John Landis turns up in a minor role. On the whole though, *Battle* feels redundant, and, after its release, Jacobs finally decided to call it a day; the extraordinarily successful and critically acclaimed *Ape* saga came to an end – at least for the time being – but remains one of the most exciting and culturally resonant sci-fi movie franchises of all time.



WAS IT REALLY THAT BAD?

by **Dominic Cuthbert**

Tim Burton's 2001 *Planet of the Apes* isn't a movie you're supposed to like. But why? The cast, while a mixed bag, are a talented ensemble, ranging from the ridiculous to the sublime. Mark Wahlberg may not be to all moviegoers' taste, but he's proved himself a competent lead numerous times (*Ted*, *The Fighter*, *Boogie Nights*), and while the viewer learns little of air force officer Captain Leo Davidson, Marky Mark does a pretty decent job spearheading this film too. This is hardly *The Happening*. It's easy to imagine Burton's go-to actor Johnny Depp in the role, but since he was tied up with *Blow* and *From Hell* at the time, it might go some way to explain Wahlberg's presence. Helena Bonham Carter, a staple of Burton's later work, makes for a compelling ape, arguably the most believable performance, and Paul Giamatti makes a wonderfully slimy slave trader, but it's Tim Roth's grizzled performance as General Thade that steals the show.

Could it be the crew? Rick Baker, the mad genius behind some of the best effects in horror, was charged with the creature FX and his monkey make-up can't be faulted. Coleen Atwood, a

frequent Burton collaborator, took care of the threads, and the costumes speak for themselves, giving the apes a real yet grungy appearance, the native humans look like Robin Williams in *Jumanji*, and Wahlberg and his crew look like they've stepped off of Gerry and Sylvia Anderson's *Space: 1999*. No complaints here. Another Burton acolyte long for the ride is Danny Elfman, whose brassy score adds a booming depth to the action.

Could it be the themes? It's a highly subversive film, filled with strong philosophical ideas. Burton's best work explores normality through outsiders, and what better way to explore society, politics and class than through *Planet of the Apes*? The film looks at slavery, complete with cages, collars and branding, and when a human child is picked out of the cage it's genuinely upsetting. At its heart, the film is a cautionary tale, a fable for animal testing.

Could it be the director himself? There's no ifs or buts, *Planet of the Apes* is a work of fan-fiction on Burton's part,

evident enough when the late Michael Clarke Duncan flips Charlton Heston's ubiquitous line. But Burton knows sci-fi, from his black-comedy *Mars Attacks* to the love letter to *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, *Ed Wood*. It touches on ape eroticism and interspecies love, all peppered with Burton's peculiar humour. The battle too, while short, is brilliantly choreographed.

Given that we've found little fault so far, it must be the plot that's forever doomed this movie then. Well, specifically ten minutes of the plot... It's the ending that soured fans, which admittedly doesn't make the slightest bit of sense and, unfortunately, spoils the rest of the film. If they'd ended the film when Wahlberg gets in his pod and flies off, you're left with something altogether more successful. They say *The Shawshank Redemption* should be stopped before Red walks down the beach and meets Andy, the same is true of *Apes*. Turn it off before the ill-advised twist ending and it's easier to see Burton's *Planet of the Apes* as the under-appreciated gem it truly is.

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The public's desire for ape antics didn't end when the films stopped, leading to some splendid (though short-lived) small screen simian shenanigans. We revisit the TV series which recycled all the magic of the PLANET OF THE APES movies to make an often overlooked show...

by Ed Fortune



20th Century Fox has a long history of ending shows before they had a chance to really get started; those still mourning the likes of *Firefly* may want to consider that way back in 1974, herds of impassioned *Planet of the Apes* fans were also foxed when the TV version of their favourite furry franchise ended after only fourteen episodes.

The lacklustre performance of the classic *Battle for the Planet of the Apes* movie in 1973 led the producers to continue the franchise on the small screen instead. The initial TV script was written by none other than *The Twilight Zone*'s very own Rod Serling, who also wrote the first *Apes* movie. The script was judged to be too dark and the entire thing was rewritten. The first episode, *Escape from Tomorrow* is a toned down version of the original feature film. Because it's a 45-minute high-speed remake of the movie that started it all, the pilot is actually pretty weak. We meet Colonel Alan Virdon and Major Peter J. Burke, NASA pilots from the far-flung future of 1980. Stumbling on a time-war, they find themselves in the year 3085AD, crash landing on Earth. Captured by apes, the hapless humans evoke the hatred of angry gorilla General Urko and are almost killed. They are set free by a chimpanzee called Galen, who's belief that man was once the dominant species on Earth makes him a heretic. A major continuity flaw is the presence of wild dogs in the first episode. Given that the premise of the entire franchise is that a great plague wiped out all dogs and cats causing humans to take apes as pets, this is a pretty important paradigm shift and has led hardcore fans to dismiss the TV series entirely, which is a pity as there are some great episodes.

The second episode, *Gladiators*, introduces the show's major plot MacGuffin: a

computer disc filled with space-flight information. The episode also pits Virdon and Burke against each other in various states of undress, though it's not as exciting as it sounds. Though Ron Harper's Colonel Virdon and James Naughton's Major Burke are supposed to be the stars of the show, it's Roddy McDowall's performance as Galen that steals it. The fact that McDowall had already played major chimpanzee roles in the movies really shows; his performance alone makes the series worth a look.

Much of the series takes place in 'The Forbidden Zone', the radiation-scorched desert that surrounds the ape cities. Conveniently, this looks a lot like the northern-California coast or parts of the 20th Century Fox backlot! By the time we get to *The Trap*, the formula for the show has become established: the astronauts and their chimpanzee friend go looking for more clues as to how to escape the planet, and the perpetually grumpy General Urko pursues them and generally makes their lives difficult. *The Trap* sees Urko and Burke trapped in the ruins of an old subway and are forced to work together until there is a sudden and inevitable betrayal.

The Good Seeds has our trio helping out some ape farmers in perhaps the duller episode of the lot. Oddly, it was also turned into a spin-off book called *Man the Fugitive*. This novelisation also contains a slightly better version of the episode *The Cure*, in which almost all the characters go mad in one way or the other. *The Cure* is one of the weakest tales in the series, with the humans somehow being able to cure malaria.

The show suffered from being a watered down version of the movies; not only when it came to special effects and

talent, over-arching themes of its predecessors such as social and racial equality took a backseat also. Worse still, Virdon and Burke spend a lot of time upstaging and out-smarting ape society, teaching the stupid primitive monkeys how to rotate crops or fish effectively, spreading hope where they can. Many fans feel that this reverses the hopeless and apocalyptic vibe of the feature films, thematically disconnecting the series from the franchise.

However, when it got it right, it really got it right. *The Deception* allows all of the actors to shine. Set in a small village, the humans befriend a blind child called Fauna. Believing the astronauts to be chimps, they become friends and there is some genuine tenderness between Burke and Fauna. Meanwhile, Galen infiltrates a band of Gorilla extremists called the Dragons. It's a marvellous exploration of prejudice, filled with genuine peril and some superb acting.

Another great story is *The Tyrant*. Again, Galen infiltrates ape society, this time in order to deal with a tyrant who is devastating human and ape communities. Not only does it give us a nice look into life as an ape, it also plays out like a proper crime drama. It's not quite *The Godfather*, but it's close enough!

The last episode in the series is perfectly ridiculous; *Up Above the World So High* is a reworking of the Icarus tale, but with a hang-glider rather than a magic machine made out of bird feathers. The astronauts use their super power (which is to know anything required by the plot) to manufacture ultra-light materials out of things lying around in a forest. The highlight is the glider ride itself, though this is filmed in seventies-style blue



screen with plenty of close up shots of a terrified looking Galen. Unlikely and silly, this sort of episode was far more frequent than the likes of *The Deception*, and it's easy to see why the show got canned.

After cancellation, various episodes were re-edited and generally messed around with to make TV movies. These are universally awful, with *Farewell to the Planet of the Apes* being a particularly infamous stinker, mostly because it combines two fairly weak episodes into one barely coherent, super boring whole.

The entire series did have a definitive ending of sorts. Roddy McDowall recorded a series of TV spots for syndication. In these very short extras, he plays the role of an aged Galen who explains that the two astronauts did find a way to escape the planet. He also laments that he got trapped in the past with the humans. It's been stated by the show's creators in the past they would have eventually moved the show to the modern day; partially for more story ideas and mostly because it would be cheaper to make it that way. Though this would have made Roddy McDowall the main star of the show, it does sound a little bit dull. The series may have ended before its time, but perhaps in this case it was a blessing.

The demise of the live action TV show didn't quite spell the end for the simian's small screen adventures. *Return to the Planet of the Apes* was a crudely animated take on the franchise. Where Hollywood and Fox had failed, animation factory DFE films attempted to carry the torch. The show lasted 13 episodes, though DFE went on to produce the likes of *What's New, Mister Magoo?*, *The Pink Panther Show* and the original *Spider-Woman* cartoon.

Though simply remaking the TV series into an animated format was discussed, DFE wanted to do their own thing. This suggestion did lead to the addition of a female astronaut however, in order to make it distinctly different from the live action series.

The show followed the adventures of NASA astronauts, Bill, Judy and Jeff, space explorers from the year 1976. Following a time-distortion related experiment, their spaceship the Venture crashes onto the Earth. Rather charmingly, all of the crew's timepieces seem to have the magical ability to tell them that they've been flung into distant 3979AD. The set-up for the show fits strangely in *Apes* continuity, drawing more inspiration from Pierre Boulle's original book than other media. The *Apes* are pretty advanced; not only do they have rifles but they also have jeeps, cars and television. They even have a plane. It's worth pointing out here that it's much easier to animate a jeep than a horse. Though cartoons have an unlimited budget when it comes to things like equipment and locations, the animation for *Return to the Planet of the Apes* was in and of itself quite limited, with the characters barely moving for much of the show. Extended action scenes tended to involve generic characters doing the same thing again and again, almost as if they only had one set of animations for certain things.

Despite these limitations, *Return to the Planet of the Apes* had a well-written script and was reasonably exciting for teatime telly. Even though it was quite different from the live-action TV series and the movies, it drew upon that established world to create familiar stories. For example, when astronauts Bill and Jeff meet the primitive humans, they bump into a lady called Nova. This is

arguably the same character from *Planet of the Apes* as she's wearing astronaut dog-tags. Characters from the full range of movies also feature and interact in ways they couldn't have done in the films simply because they didn't have the right actors on set at the time. Another good example is that *The Underworlders* from *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* are dealt with almost from the very beginning, with Judy becoming their sort of leader/messiah figure. Remixes of canonical characters also appear, for example we meet Ron Brent, who is basically the same character of John Brent from *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, right down to the fetching loincloth.

Episodes include the very silly *Attack from the Clouds*, which features a dragon-like creature turning up to wreak havoc, and *Terror on Ice Mountain*, which introduces Kygor, the yeti-like god of the mountain apes. (Alas, he's only a very big statue.) *Lagoon of Fear* introduces a Loch Ness monster-style creature into the mix. As you can see, the show took pretty large liberties with the source material, and span-off in some wild directions.

The series ended in the same way as it began - as a weird mish-mash of ideas that would have worked better if the animation hadn't been so cheaply done. The last episode, *Battle of the Titans*, featured hot air balloons, WWII aircraft, giant serpents and a mysterious, world-shattering book called *A Day at the Zoo*. Maybe some day an enterprising *Apes* fan will use this obscure bit of TV trivia as inspiration and give this rich world the high quality animated treatment it deserves, but until then, *Return to the Planet of the Apes* remains a lovely bit of '70s kids-TV nostalgia.





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WHERE MAN ONCE STOOD SUPREME--NOW RULE THE APES!



COMICS OF THE APES

by Ed Fortune

As far back as the 1950s, it was a widely held belief that if a comic book had a gorilla, chimp or monkey on the cover it was more likely to sell. Most ape-themed villains were created during the Silver Age of comic books, and DC felt it such a noteworthy and pernicious thing that they placed a limit on the amount of primates permitted per month. This is the main reason why the PLANET OF THE APES license has been fought over throughout the franchise's history. Chimp comics are seen as a guaranteed seller, even to this day, and artists all over the world have tried to turn the franchise into sequential art...

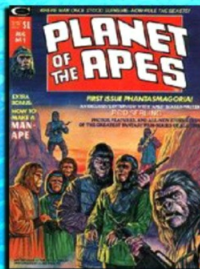
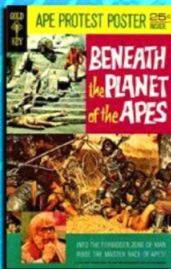
The first *Planet of the Apes* movie tie-in ever produced was in 1968, for the now defunct Japanese manga Bessatsu Bōken Ō (Adventure King). It was a relatively faithful adaptation of the movie and is very firmly out of print with issues in poor condition going for around £200 at auctions. Adaptations of other *Apes* movies appeared in *Weekly Shōnen Champion*, a magazine that is still very much alive (though good luck finding back issues).

The West wouldn't see a comic book version of the angry apes until the second movie. *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* was produced by Gold Key and drawn

by the legendary Alberto Giolitti. Though Giolitti is fondly remembered by some for cowboy comics such as the *Cisco Kid* and *Gunsmoke*, he is better known for his work on the early *Star Trek* comic strips, also published by Gold Key, who specialised in tie-in comic strips. Gold Key did have some original titles of their own, including *Turok*, *Son of Stone*. It's worth noting that all the rights to their back catalogue now belong to the DreamWorks Animation Studio. The most fondly remembered franchise holder was Marvel Comics. During the seventies, Marvel was churning out as many movie tie-ins as it could find and the two books that attract the most nostalgia are *Star Wars* and *Planet of the Apes*.

Marvel's monkeys were a treat to behold; *Planet of the Apes* Magazine not only featured an adaptation of each movie, it also expanded on the world itself. *Terror on the Planet of the Apes* was the tale of the evil gorilla Brutus and his ongoing quest to oppress and rule. Other strips included an Ape's history lesson called *Evolution's Nightmare* and the utterly wild *Future History Chronicles*, which featured city-sized ships on black seas.

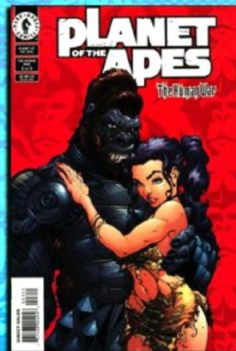
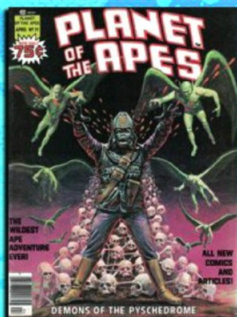
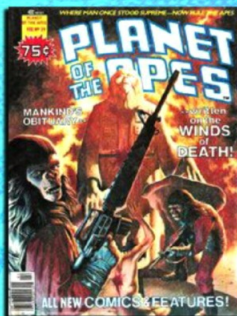
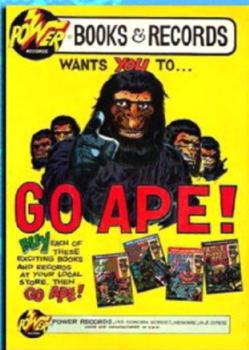
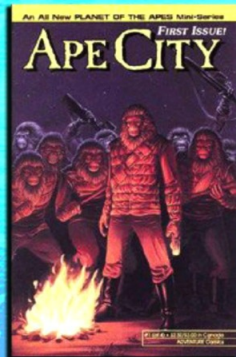
The magazine was also filled with loads of behind the scenes photos from the movies and interviews with the cast, but it sadly folded in 1977 thanks to a drop in subscriptions and a rise in licensing



fees. Genre junkies didn't have to wait long for another source of behind the scenes photos and interviews though - STARBURST launched that very same year!

Other also-rans include *Power Records*, who produced short strips to accompany their ape-based audio dramas back in 1975 and Brown Watson Books series of annuals inspired by the short-lived TV show. The Annuals actually outlived the show and were filled with confused and confusing artwork. Another TV related spin-off was the Argentinean tie-in comic book produced by Editorial Mo.Pa.Sa. They were as short-lived as the show but remain a firm favourite amongst hardcore fans, with unofficial English language translations being available on the web.

Perennial runner-up Malibu Comics also had a crack at the franchise in the early '90s. In addition to reprinting some of Marvel's books, they also produced a tie-in with their other franchise, *Alien*



Nation. Malibu produced four other mini-series, *Urchak's Folly*, *Forbidden Zone*, *Ape City* and *Blood of the Apes*. Though pretty unremarkable, they did feature a lot of gore. Dark Horse Comics, whose back catalogue is heavily reliant on popular sci-fi movies from the '60s and '70s only held the licenses for a short while. Their books tied into Tim Burton's vision of the Apes continuity and were handled by Gothic scribe Ian Edginton. After some toy tie-ins and the inevitable movie adaptation, Dark Horse galloped off to more profitable grounds.

Another attempt at entering the simian hall of fame was 2005's *Revolution on the Planet of the Apes*, produced by Canadian publisher Mr Comics. It was a labour of love by comic book creator Ty Templeton, but no one bought it and the rights were eventually picked up by Boom! Studios in 2011.

Boom! currently control the license and have cleverly evaded the problem of a difficult and entrenched continuity by setting their version a good length of time before the original 1968 movie. The result is a book heavily informed by the comics of the past. We have Marvel's strange pulp vision, Mr Comic's earnest exploration of the franchise's themes and Malibu's buckets of gore. Boom! have issued four mini-series and a number of specials so far. They detail the foundation of Apes society (including the rise of the Moses-like Lawgiver) and the collapse (and enslavement) of mankind. Dark and heavy with meaning, it's the treatment the franchise has waited over forty years for. It's also selling very well, partially because people will still buy any comic book with a monkey on the cover.

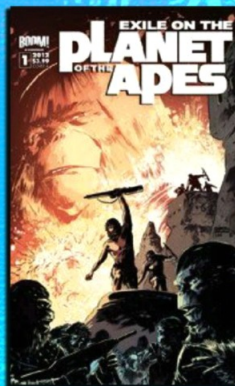
APESLAYER OF MARS



One of the unique treats that British *Planet of The Apes* fans got to enjoy during the seventies was *Apeslayer*, the tale of a human rebel who fought against the Ape oppression. The UK preferred its comic books to be weekly rather than monthly and even though the American strips were carefully chopped and edited it still meant that the British version was going to run out of material unless something special was added. *Apeslayer* was brought in to pad out Marvel UK's *Planet of the Apes Magazine*.

All was not what it seemed however; for a post-apocalyptic world ruled by super intelligent apes the level of technology was much greater than what we'd seen in the movies. The apes had huge TV screens, weird architecture and giant tripod-like death machines. This is because the strips were originally known as *Killraven*, a *War of the Worlds* themed tale about one very muscular, semi-naked man who punched aliens for a living. Marvel UK simply redrew the heads of the Martians so they resembled chimps instead. They adjusted some of the dialogue, adding extra exposition to explain the death machines and heat rays. They also changed Killraven's hair colour and did their best to shoe-horn it in to the continuity.

Ultimately, the Marvel UK version of *Planet of the Apes* suffered the same fate every British Action Comic did; it got merged with another comic book, in this case *Dracula Lives*. Eventually both *Dracula* and the Apes went into another book - *The Mighty World of Marvel*. It didn't last that long, but it did have both gun-wielding Gorillas and the Incredible Hulk on the cover, who could ask for more!





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A MONKEY BUSINESS

by Jack Bottomley

STARBURST escapes from captivity to present you with a guide to some of the most distinctive PLANET OF THE APES merchandise in existence!

There are film sagas that lend themselves to mass merchandising, heck, there isn't many kids out there who haven't wanted to be swing licks like Spider-Man (Aqua-Man however, is a different story). Although one series that does not necessarily scream "make produce" is the *Planet of the Apes*. This sci-fi series comes with big themes and big surprises, but the biggest is how much monkey business the films have caused in the world of retail! It really is amazing how much merchandise ape-occupied Earth offers, from the inexplicable to the useful, to some real hair-brained products. From inflatable Dr. Zaius' to ape helicopters, Sideshow's impressive figures to Hasbro's excessively hairy ones, we saw it all in our search to bring you the best examples out there...



PLANET OF THE APES RING TOSS GAME (1974)

When a bottle isn't good enough to toss a ring round, it seems an ape is the next logical step. Or at least that's what Pressman Toy Company seems to think with this unusual choice for a *Planet of the Apes* game. Complete with a "giant" standing figure (well, a few inches high) and 6 rings, this attractive nonsense is one of the more level-headed products out there and genuinely fun. Which gives you some indication of just how irrational some other entries on this list are going to be!

BOOM-A-RANGUTANG (1974)

Cinematic stereotyping is a terrible thing but in all fairness products like this don't help. These weird boomerangs have very little to actually do with the movies themselves, beyond the point it's presented as a banana and apes love bananas, although we can't recollect any of the characters chucking them at Charlton Heston. But maybe that's just us. The flimsy Boom-a-rangutang is one of those novelty items that you just know is a load of monkey dung but at the same time has that inexplicable "I want it" quality.

PELLET-SHOOTING WALKIE-TALKIE (1974)

Back when popping a cap in someone's ass was only an accidental use of your pellet-shooting walkie-talkie... OK, maybe not. When communications go south, indulge your inner primate by tossing crap at your mate. We can only assume that was the mind-set that went into this nonsensical toy made by Larami, which only really linked to the franchise in any sense thanks to the package art that depicted Brent and Nova from

Beneath the Planet of the Apes. Not sure if encouraging kids to shoot their mates for not answering them is the best way to go though, hell, in these days of Facebook messages being ignored, it would be chaos: "Are you alright, mate? Answer me! Argh! Eat my pellets!"

DON POST MASKS (1975)

There are some odd items here but this one is the most logical piece of merchandise listed and one of the best. To quote Alan Partridge, "monkey hats and tat" have been a token of childhood as long as those crappy bow and arrows from fairs that break on the first go. However, these Don Post masks were far from the thin plastic facemasks that were knocked together, they were the real deal. Made by Don Post Studios (started by legendary mask maker Don Post, "the godfather of Halloween") in the '70s, these quality masks were a fantastic way to indulge your inner primate. Hairy and great to look at, they are often considered among the best of the items to evolve from the films. In fact, some are sold over the internet to this day, albeit prices have changed massively!

PLANET OF THE APES PLAY FEET (1974)

Released by Commonwealth, these glorified foot covers are another walk on the wild side of movie merchandise. We're not really sure where the idea for these play feet came from, but one can only look at them and think... eh? After all, what kid would want to worry about how their feet looked while running around in a monkey mask in the garden?

ATTAR COOKIE JAR (2001)

Not only a fantastic piece of rhyming but also perhaps the only decent thing (Rick Baker's make up and Danny Elfman's score aside) to emerge from Tim Burton's ill-advised knuckle-dragging 2001 remake. Why keep your cookies in a boring old tin or that stupid packaging when you can have the 12" armoured-up Attar (played by the late Michael Clarke Duncan in the film) guarding them in your kitchen. Ok, so it is not exactly fabulous but at least it is not Ape-raham Lincoln. *face palm*

MONKEY SHINES FLASHLIGHT (1974)

Though the title reads like a sentence, this flashlight shows that a) People really will buy anything if you had the brand name on it, and b) Even apes need a helping hand in the dark. So what if it's just Larami slapping Cornelius on a cheap light, it is still an unavoidably batty piece of kit for the little and large ape lovers out there.

SKY DIVING PARACHUTIST (1974)

Azrak Hamway International (AHI) certainly had their share of weird Apes rack toys in the market, from the ape water pistol to the dodgily titled Little Walkers (which at first glance looked like it said something else). However the Sky Diving Parachutist was one of the most bizarre. The toy came in two versions, one being Galen and the other





being (a slightly more ginger) Dr. Zaius in a jumpsuit, and neither made much sense as official merchandise. Still, as a kid dropping it from the upstairs window, it hardly mattered. In fact nowadays they're fairly collectable.

INTER-PLANETARY APE PHONES (1974)

Pellet shooting Ape walkie-talkies? Pfft. These are Ape Phones, and not just any old phones at that – these are *inter-planetary* ones! (Although, to our knowledge, there is no evidence that they actually worked as a communicator between worlds.) What do they have to do with *Planet of the Apes* you ask? Bigger all of course, but this glorified spin on the can-on-a-string from Larami is, among the most interesting toys out there and further proof that the company most likely spent the entirety of 1974 drawing mind maps and making official merchandise out of whatever came up in amidst all the monkey chatter at the office.

PLANET OF THE APES SILLY SOAP (1974)

This product is like something right out of *Flubber* – bendy *Planet of the Apes* soap! The fact the “damn dirty apes” use soap proves that George Taylor was being very unfair with his insult. The whole idea of this crazy little thing is that you can mould it into various shapes and it’s the “world’s only soft soap”. You can play with it, wash with it (not sure why that is such a novelty for soap) and not worry about dying, as it is non-toxic (phew). This Hot Items product sure demands attention in terms of creativity and is among the more innovative product with old Zaius’ hairy mug on it.

GORILLA GLASSES (1974)

Deceptively titled, this Larami (them again) item is not a reading aid for the aging primate warrior but a pair of licensed binoculars. When a film has amassed a big enough audience to flog binoculars, then you can clearly see why so many weird and wonderful products made it into the market. 1974 was really the fever pitch year for *Planet of the Apes* products that swarmed the market and in many ways pre-dated how *Star Wars* (only 3 years later) would turn merchandise into an intrinsic part of the film process.

BIKE SAFETY FLAGS (1974)

This will be a nostalgia trip for many readers; you could literally fly the flag for the species with these nifty bike safety flags decorated by the handsomely hairy features of the characters. These are actually quite a stylish way to pimp your ride (sorry), and with 4 flags available you could choose from General Aldo, Galen, Zira and Dr. Zaius (he’s a pretty big deal). Mind you if a war between man and monkey did eventually break out, you could be prosecuted as a traitor flying this flag, so think on.

PERISCOPE (1967)

You can rise above the planet of the apes with this Winner produced,

19-inch-long periscope, decked out with characters from the films. This is an earlier item in the apesverse and just as loosely based on the actual films (ok, so loosely is even pushing it) as you’d expect – we don’t recall Dr. Zira relying on her periscope in times of need! However, this is yet another crazy, fully licensed item that hit shelves promoting the movies. This periscope may not be quite as bizarre as some on this list but it showcases the unorthodox nature of this series’ memorabilia.

BOTTLE MODELS (1975)

Addar’s Super Scene series were self-assembly models, whereby the image/scene was given dimension within a bottle. One of the most famous was the *Jaws* Super Scene but *Planet of the Apes* also got in on the action with 3 different models in the series: The Jail Wagon, Cornfield Round-up and Tree House. These bottle models today are quite sought after and even back then were among the better ideas for a product. Well if you can have a ship in a bottle why not an ape tree house?

PLANET OF THE APES SUNGLASSES HAT (1975)

It doesn’t get more vintage than this garish giggle, which is far from a funky monkey! This is a real goofy looking thing that the council of ape city would have undoubtedly outlawed; a piece of headwear that takes the top banana as the oddest of all merchandise out there, not least because its yellow colour scheme makes out that the *Planet of the Apes* universe at some point had intercourse with *The Simpsons*. That said, would you rather the sun blind you, or have a cool head and be able to see with this novelty headwear? Actually give us a moment to weigh up the pros and cons...

EDITOR’S CHOICE

Out of all the genre franchises it has to be said that *Planet of the Apes* merch was really out there. Out of the myriad of outlandish stuff still available via eBay, the *Planet of the Apes* belt buckles were my personal fave. A piece of collectable memorabilia so awesome that whilst admittedly screaming “nerd” and attracting the attentions of the school bully, it was more than happy to oblige when dispensing a monkey slapdown. Forget pepper spray, wandering round the playground with a very meaty, well balanced apes buckle, and you were sorted. Sadly the headmaster did not have to call in CSI when confronted with a spate of semi-conscious youths all sporting Roddy McDowall imprints on their foreheads!

Jordan M. Royce





SURE, THE PLANET OF THE APES FRANCHISE INTRODUCED AUDIENCES TO THEIR FAIR SHARE OF FUNKY MONKEYS, BUT CAESAR AND CO AREN'T THE ONLY BADASS CINEMATIC SIMIANS TO GRACE THE BIG-SCREEN. READ ON FOR OUR FAVOURITES...

KING KONG (KING KONG)

A gigantic solitary ape living on Skull Island? Attracted to human females he had no hope of mating with? A sequel featuring his inexplicable son? Look, just deal with it. King Kong was the Eighth Wonder of the World; the original Big Monster whose cultural impact was so great that when Mrs Aldie Mackay saw something fishy in Loch Ness on Kong's British opening weekend, a monster-obsessed press invented our own beastie. No, really, Kong's death on the Empire State was iconic but that still didn't stop him making a monkey of the allegedly unbeatable Godzilla in 1962. He wasn't called "King" for nothing. | JK



NIKKO (THE WIZARD OF OZ)

Freddy Krueger, Jason Voorhees, Leatherface, Michael Myers and Chuckie may have had more films to terrorise audiences in but all of them combined haven't disturbed as many childhoods as this blue-



skinned, winged henchmonkey and his insidious army. Known as the Monkey King in L. Frank Baum's original novel, re-christening him with a human name in the 1939 MGM classic failed to make this animal any less wild. Monkeys are generally an affectionate bunch and even other entrants on this list have charm, but Nikko and his fiendish flying friends are less primates and more 'prime-hates'. Excluding the fact they serve a green-skinned witch, seeing them swooping down like the paparazzi on a Kardashians wedding remains a lingering image in fantasy film. Even the Avengers used them, during conversation, as a prime example of villainy and we certainly got that reference! | JB

MOON-WATCHER (2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY)

The first featured character in Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey, Moon-Watcher leads a tribe of proto-hominids who are saved from starvation by the intervention of a mysterious black monolith. Moon-Watcher is afforded an intelligence upgrade and realises that a femur makes for a pretty nifty multi-purpose weapon (as well as inspiring the world's first boner joke), and as the orchestral upswell of Also sprach Zarathustra accompanies his clubbing exploits, he soon becomes the lord of all he surveys, presumably with a Neogenic equivalent of maniacal laughter. Also, by tossing a bone into the air he apparently inspired space flight. | AM



MONKEY (MONKEY)

"Born from an egg on a mountaintop," the eponymous protagonist of the cult '80s action series was equal parts formidable warrior and pain in the arse, who journeyed across China battling demons after being exiled from Heaven for annoying everyone and imprisoned under a mountain for 500 years. As well as fighting with his Magic Wishing Staff (ooh my) that can grow and shrink in size depending on his mood (ooh my, my), he can summon clones by blowing on plucked chest hairs, shapeshift into 72 forms, and ride on a pink cloud summoned with a whistle. "The nature of Monkey was irrepressible!" | AM



NAZI MONKEY (RAIDERS OF LOST ARK)

Possibly the cutest Nazi of all time! The delightful Capuchin which befriends Indy and Marion in Cairo is actually reporting their every move back to its masters, even going as far as aiding in her capture. He's so adorable however, that when he eventually gets his comeuppance, courtesy of some bad dates, you actually feel sorry for him. Actor Frank Welker, who provided the monkey's voice, has also lent his vocal talents to assorted Transformers, Muppet Babies, Fred from Scooby Doo and Inspector Gadget's Doctor Claw. The famous Nazi salute was directed by George Lucas, meaning he managed to coax a better performance from a monkey than he did out of Hayden Christensen. | IR



LINK (LINK)

Imp, Voodoo and Link might sound like a trio of sinister supernatural solicitors but they're actually the three simian stars of Richard Franklin's underrated 1986 British horror movie. Zoology student Jane Chase (Elisabeth Shue) undertakes some summer research work for Professor Steven Phillip (Terrence Stamp) at his remote country retreat. Imp and Voodoo prove loveable, but Link ain't so cute - he's a more mature monkey and smarter than the average ape. When Professor Phillip decides Link is more trouble than he's worth and arranges to have him put down, the animal turns the tables and does everything in his primate power to save himself. This involves terrorising poor Jane and killing everyone else in sight. Link - quite clearly an orangutan with his fur dyed black - meets a fiery end after an accident with a cooker. Sadly, Link's a chimp who turns out to be a chump. | PM



ELLA (MONKEY SHINES)

Beware of Ella. This cute little helper monkey is trained to care for quadriplegic Alan Mann after a brain tissue experiment has increased her intelligence. Cuteness aside, she's really the Annie Wilkes of the ape world. Okay, she's too small to hobble you with a sledgehammer but in her simian hands, smothering is only a short jump from mothering. And speaking of mothering, Ella's known to kill inquisitive mums and two-timing girlfriends when her altered brain picks up your negative musings via telepathy. Think happy thoughts and you might live through to corrective surgery. But even then... | RP



SUMATRAN RAT-MONKEY (BRAINEAD)

"You've got... THE BITE!" If you're looking for one of cinema's most lethal simians, look no further than *Braindead*'s Sumatran Rat-Monkey. More rat than ape in appearance, the disgusting creature is the result of giant rats arriving on Skull Island and raping the tree monkeys inhabiting it. Its prominent front teeth are perfect for sinking into the flesh of innocent chimpanzees and not-so-innocent evil-monkeys, setting in motion the events of the film. Jackson's rat-monkey is a homage to horror classics and artists who created iconic creatures: the fictional Skull Island is the same home as another rampaging primate on this very list, and the stop-motion animation used to bring him to life are a nod to legendary special-effects artists like Ray Harryhausen. The Sumatran Rat-Monkey is not only the most badass little monkey to grace the screen, it's also got a fairly prestigious pedigree! | VB



BETSY (OUTBREAK)

"Have you seen this monkey?" demands a desperate Dustin Hoffman, brandishing a picture of a startled-looking capuchin in one of the more gloriously silly sequences in 1995's absurd deadly virus thriller (in which Kevin Spacey's character contracts the lethal organ-ligandifying virus... but recovers). "Yes!" shrieks the audience. "That's Marcel, Ross's monkey from the second season of *Friends*!"

Actually a female capuchin called Katie, in *Outbreak* she's Betsy, carrier of the deadly (and fictional) Motaba virus, and she's eventually tracked down and captured in the back yard of the family whose daughter she's been playing with. Betsy/Marcel/Katie went on to appear in a string of Hollywood hits and has enjoyed a more successful feature film career than any of the human cast of *Friends*. Probably. | PM



LAB CHIMP (28 DAYS LATER)

The anonymous chimp guilty for kick-starting the apocalyptic-level epidemic in Danny Boyle's 2002 pseudo-zombie romp is rightly peeved. He's infected with "Rage" (the highly contagious kind) by meddling white coats, making a monkey martyr out of him. He paces his cage as misguided activists make their way in, effing and blinding. Once freed he goes well and truly ape, riling his simian brethren and giving a passable facehugger impression until he soon meets a sticky fate at the business end of his would-be saviour's crowbar. | DC



JACK (PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN)

Mischievous, odd and captivating, Jack is truly the treasure of this franchise! What's that? No, we mean the monkey Jack! Fair dues, Johnny Depp's beloved prancing pirate Jack Sparrow may be the human highlight reel of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series, but Hector Barbosa's (Geoffrey Rush) pet monkey Jack has left his furry little paw prints all over the franchise, from holding up a parrot at gunpoint to lighting up the enemy with fireworks. Come rain, shine, cold or Calypso (let's forget about that one) little Jack is still alive (well, 'undead' to be precise... didn't we mention that?) and scaring the bejesus out of Captain Sparrow at every opportunity, even from a shrunken Black Pearl in a bottle! He hates that monkey. | JB



MASTER MONKEY (KUNG FU PANDA)

Define awesome: a Golden snub-nosed monkey who's a legendary acrobatic Kung Fu master and voiced by Jackie Chan. That'll do it. Of the Furious Five ensemble of kung fu warriors (consisting of Mantis, Tigress, Viper and Crane), he is perhaps the most reserved, but that only adds to his (h)air of mystery. When he talks we listen, especially when showing his approval of noodle soup. Master Monkey is a skilled fighter who knows when to appreciate good chow, but is also ready and willing to go to battle against a peacock warlord alongside his badass animal buddies. | JB



Words: Vanessa Berben, Jack Bottomley, Dominic Cuthbert, John Knott, Andrew Marshall, Paul Mount, Robin Pierce, Iain Robertson

OUTSIDE THE BOX

ALL THE NEWS
FROM THE WORLDS
OF DOCTOR WHO
WITH PAUL MOUNT



DOCTOR WHO Wins Again at BAFTAs!

Following the success of both *Doctor Who* and the *Adventure in Space and Time* TV Movie in the BAFTA Craft Awards earlier in April (see issue 401), *Doctor Who* was a surprise winner in the BAFTA Television Awards on 18th May. The anniversary episode *Day of the Doctor* was short-listed in the Radio Times Audience Award category (voted by the public) alongside strong dramatic competition such as *Breaking Bad*, *Broadchurch* and some reality shows. The episode's success was announced at the BAFTA Ceremony held at London's Theatre Royal in Drury Lane and broadcast live on BBC1 to an audience of just over 5 million viewers. With most of *Doctor Who*'s cast and core production crew still busily filming the forthcoming eighth season, it fell to BBC Wales Head of Drama Faith Penhale, ex-producer Marcus Wilson and *Day of the Doctor* director Nick Hurran to take to the stage to collect the award. "This award is for anybody who has had a hand in *Doctor Who* over the last fifty years," said Penhale. "Last year we celebrated our anniversary so this is really special." *An Adventure in Space and Time*, nominated in the 'Best Single Drama' category was beaten on the night by Channel 4 drama *Complicité*.

Further success for *Doctor Who* with BBC1 winning the 'Eurovision Connect' award for 'Best Promotion for a Fictional Programme' for *Day of the Doctor* at the 'Eurovision Connect' conference in Vienna. The conference brings together over 140 television professionals from 'public service' Broadcasters across Europe.

The *Doctor Who* origins drama *An Adventure in Space and Time* has also received a number of nominations in the prestigious American 'Critics Choice' Awards presented at the Beverly Hilton Hotel on 19th June in a ceremony hosted by an individual who calls himself Cedric the Entertainer. The TV film is nominated in the 'Best Drama' category with David Bradley receiving recognition with a 'Best Actor in a Movie or Mini-Series' nomination for his portrayal of the late William Hartnell and Jessica Raine in the 'Best Supporting Actress' category for her role as the late Verity Lambert. *Doctor Who*'s first producer, *Outside the Box* will, as ever, report on the results next issue.

Series 8

With BBC 1 premiering the first brief trailer for the new season on Saturday 24th May - the silhouette of new Doctor Peter Capaldi in what appears to be an exploding TARDIS control room - production proceeds apace with the series now widely expected to debut on August 23rd (the BBC have yet to formally announce the date but the teaser trailer indicates an August arrival for the series). Cast and crew announcements are now coming in thick and fast. Actress Hermione Norris, former star of ITV's *Cold Feet* and BBC1's spy drama *Spooks*, has been cast in an episode written by Peter Harness (see last issue) and directed by Paul Wilmhurst, which saw cast and crew spend a few days in Lanzarote in the Canary islands (where sequences were filmed for the 1984 Peter Davison serial *Planet of Fire*). As usual, showrunner Steven Moffat has been on hand to comment on the latest casting announcement, stating, "It's a testament to the quality of Peter Harness's intense and emotional script, that we've been able to attract an actress of the brilliance of Hermione Norris. And for the first time since 1984, the *Doctor Who* production team is heading to Lanzarote. The Doctor is returning to the scene of an old adventure - but there have been sinister changes since his last visit."

Shortly afterwards came the news that comedian/TV presenter Frank Skinner, a long-time obsessive fan of *Doctor Who*, will be appearing in Jamie Mathieson's episode (also last issue), again directed by Wilmhurst. Skinner, who appeared in a non-speaking role as a Dalek voice artist in last year's Peter Davison-directed *Five Doctors* Reboot online skit, said "I love this show. I subscribe to *Doctor Who* magazine, I've got a TARDIS ringtone, a five-foot cardboard Dalek in my bedroom and when I got the call saying they wanted me to read for the part, I was in the back of my tour bus watching episode three of *The Seniors*. I am beyond excited."

Finally 29th May saw the announcement that Grammy Award-winning singer/songwriter Foxes (Louisa Rose Allen) will feature somewhere in the new series. The singer, currently promoting her Top Ten debut album *Glorious*, spoke of how she came to be cast in the series: "I can't believe I'm actually going to be in an episode of *Doctor Who*! Especially as it all came about from a chance meeting. I was playing a gig and got chatting to



the show's production team who'd been watching my performance. I was telling them how much I loved **Doctor Who** and next thing they invited me to be on it. I couldn't think of a better place to make my acting debut than on one of the UK's most iconic shows!" Young people might be familiar with Foxes' three "hit singles" - *Youth* soared to number 12 in 2013, *Let Go For Tonight* peaked at no 7 and *Holding on to Heaven* reached no 14 earlier this year.

Also cast in the new series are some names hardcore fans will recognise from the 'classic' **Doctor Who** series: Janet Henfrey (*Curse of Fenric*, 1989), Christopher Villiers (*The King's Demons*, 1983) and Tony Osoba (*Destiny of the Daleks*, 1979 and *Dragonfire*, 1987) have all been cast in the new series.

Behind the camera, Rachel Talalay, best known for her work on the ill-fated feature film version of *Tank Girl* in 1995 and on TV shows such as *Supernatural*, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, *Ally McBeal* and *Haven* will direct two episodes of the upcoming season. She told *Bitch Magazine* (hmmm... get us a subscription): "Every episode of **Doctor Who** is like a mini-feature and they're all completely different. They're massive. I'm so excited to get to work with the show... I don't approach it in terms of 'What am I bringing that's different?' I'm approaching it in terms of 'How the Hell do you do this?!' It's so hard! It's so big and so hard and so ambitious. When you're working with a wonderful script, you just think, 'How do I tell this story beautifully and blow away the audience?'"

Book News

With **Doctor Who** on reduced or irregular duties over the last couple of years, new **Doctor Who** novels have been thin on the ground but it appears that the BBC will be reviving the new series tradition of releasing a trio of new titles, presumably in the now-familiar paperback-size hardback format with the arrival of the new series. Three new books are due to be released early in September. *Silhouette* will be written by Justin Richards, *The Crawling Terror* by Mike Tucker and *Blood Cell* by James Goss. Cover details and synopses are expected to be released shortly.

Finally, a quick correction to last month's 'Book News' where we reported that Gareth Roberts' novelisation of 1979 TV serial *City of Death* had been 'just released'. We now understand that the hardback book is due to be published in May 2015. Rest assured that the person responsible for this error has been soundly beaten about the head and shoulders with a perigosto stick and buried alive for six weeks in wolfweed droppings.

Life Outside the TARDIS

The careers of former occupants of the TARDIS appear to be flourishing with both Matt Smith (the Eleventh/Twelfth Doctor) and his companion Karen Gillan (Amy Pond) recently cast in high profile new projects. Smith, whose Ryan Gosling-directed feature film *Lost River* (formerly *How to Catch a Monster*) debuted last month at the Cannes Film

Festival to a mixed response, has won a significant role in the forthcoming fifth movie in the apparently never-ending **Terminator** franchise. Said Smith: "All I can say about *Terminator* is that I'm very excited to be part of the franchise because those movies - those first two movies, particularly - are brilliant. Yeah, it's very exciting." Meanwhile, Gillan, who has enjoyed a substantial hit at the US Box office with her low-budget horror thriller *Oculus*, just released in the UK, will also appear as Nebula in the Marvel Universe movie **Guardians of the Galaxy**, out in the UK on August 1st. In addition the actress will appear in ABC sitcom **Selfie** as social-media obsessed airhead Eliza (the series is a loose update of **My Fair Lady** and, if we may editorialise for a moment, looks absolutely appalling) and also alongside Ethan Hawke, John Travolta and Taissa Farniga in western movie **A Valley of Violence**, directed by Ti West.

Arthur Darvill, Amy's put-upon husband Rory Williams, is currently filming the second series of ITV crime drama **Broadchurch** (alongside former Tenth Doctor David Tennant) where he will reprise his role as vicar Paul Coates.



WATCHING DOCTOR WHO

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK
AT THE WHONIVERSE
BY JR SOUTHALL



Something funny has happened to the original 1963 – 1989 run of *Doctor Who*, something that nobody could have predicted. After a quarter of a century of lying dormant in the BBC archive, dissected and analysed to within an inch of reason, it has started twitching again.

It has come back to life.

People have always met up in pubs and cafes and on internet forums to talk about *Doctor Who*, of course. But until recently, that conversation has had a very definite dichotomy: talk of the new series was about something that was current, recent or upcoming, something that was fully alive, in other words; whereas talk on the old was an evaluation of something long since passed, something that was, effectively, dead. This disparity has of late transformed, with a number of incidents serving to bring the classic series more in line with its successor. Serving to make it more alive, shall we say.

The first signs of revivification came

when *The Reign of Terror* was issued on DVD just over a year ago – although to be fair, there was a brief but ultimately meaningless spark of activity back in 2006, upon *The Invasion*'s release. A series that had, for 25 years, been something finite, something as complete as we could ever imagine it being (barring the occasional missing episode recovery, the most recent of which had been *Day of Armageddon* in 2004), was being reanimated. Suddenly, there was new "old" *Doctor Who* that we could watch and enjoy, and not just as a one-off; *The Reign of Terror* was the beginning of an ongoing process, the effect of which was to expand our ability to engage with the classic series more or less first-hand, rather than vicariously as with the books, audios and reconstructions. With the missing episodes recreated in a manner that made them feel of a piece with their existing counterparts, the black and white era of *Doctor Who* was once again growing, having new life breathed into it. The animated

incomplete story releases continued with *The Ice Warriors*, *The Tenth Planet* and *The Moonbase*, and it almost felt as if we were entering a new era wherein new old *Doctor Who* would be a regular feature of the DVD schedule, alongside the last few complete stories to be released and the Revisitations. The omens looked good for *The Underwater Menace*, and maybe *The Crusade*, to join *The Reign of Terror* and the others – and there was even speculation that the boat might be pushed out even further, in order to animate an entire six-part missing serial, *The Power of the Daleks*.

And then something happened, something that concomitantly killed the reanimations stone dead, while breathing actual new life into the classic series, rather than the artificial stuff of which these animations were made. Phil Morris, the "Indiana Jones of the lost episodes", found and returned *The Enemy of the World* and (most of) *The Web of Fear*, the first truly "new" old and (more or less) complete

Doctor Who stories to be released by the BBC since *The Tomb of the Cybermen* back in 1991.

The irony is palpable. The notion, currently unproven of course, that Morris may have more recovered episodes up his sleeves has re-engaged fans with classic *Doctor Who* in a way that the animated stories almost but inevitably couldn't quite manage. Yet if Morris *hasn't* found any more *Doctor Who*, and with the animation project seemingly ground to a halt, then the chances are that the eventual total number of episodes that we will be able to watch – with moving pictures – might have been diminished as a result. The success of *The Web of Fear*, with its simple photo-montage reconstruction of the still-missing third instalment, would seem to have proven to the BBC that the extra cost of animating missing episodes in order to complete partially missing stories isn't worth paying. For all Planet 55's talk of suspending production on *The Underwater Menace* due to an expanded workload, the likelihood is that the story might well have fallen by the wayside anyway. Not because the BBC think it might have been recovered in full – although undoubtedly they would hope so – but because it will be more profitable for them not to bother. It will be a real shame if it were to transpire that we were robbed of a full animation of Patrick Troughton's debut serial for the same reason; unless, of course, Phil Morris is able instead to provide us with the miracle that would be the genuine article.

The Crusade, on the other hand, was never mentioned in the same breath as the other reanimated stories, and speculation was rife that the reason it was unlikely to receive the same treatment was because, as a historical story, its sales projections would have been lower. This isn't necessarily the likeliest of explanations; the chances are that as an independent company, Pup Ltd – who were responsible in the last few years for preparing classic *Doctor Who* for DVD release – wouldn't have been bound by the same strict guidelines as other, internal BBC products. The budgets for the animated



stories may well have been subsidised by judicious reallocation of resources originally destined for the Revisitation releases. We'll probably never know, but the animations were obviously expensive, and the sales of these stories, while undoubtedly important, were presumably not the whole picture – a picture that sadly appears to have changed anyway, with the releases of the recently recovered stories having been brought in-house, and into an environment in which Value Added Material (extra features to you and me) might possibly be regarded as an unnecessary expense.

The other theory governing the lack of chatter about an animated version of *The Crusade*, was the notion that such a release may have crossed the line of political correctness. In the story, originally broadcast in 1965, Caucasian actor Bernard Kay "blacks up" in order to play the role of Saladin, a practice that was perhaps unfortunate but would have been seen as simply a sign of the times in other retrospective releases like *The Talons of*

Weng-Chiang. By animating 50% of *The Crusade*, the BBC would effectively be creating a "new" version that would (albeit in the extant portions of the story) include the outmoded practice, and in these days of heightened political tensions, maybe this was seen as simply not worth the risk. Kay may only be wearing the very non-PC make-up in the bits of the story that already existed, but the product as a whole would be effectively a "new" story, insofar as the BBC (and the tabloid press) would have been concerned – and what was old would suddenly have become current.

Which brings us back to the corpse, as was.

The amazing thing is that, unlike the constantly evolving and expanding new series, the original run of *Doctor Who* is something we thought we knew, something we thought of as fixed and finished, something complete. We've had half a lifetime to come to terms with it, to fix the boundaries of our understanding of it, and to evolve our appreciation of it. The idea that it can still "grow", that something that was so "finished" still has the ability to expand, reconnects us with it in ways beyond simply being able to watch the newly-returned episodes. It has made the classic series into something that is now flexible in our comprehension, adaptive in our approval; the new old bits affect our understanding of the old old bits, if you will.

For fans of a series as weathered and as taken for granted as original *Doctor Who*, it's a brave new world in which to find ourselves.

It has been rumoured, entirely erroneously, that *Marco Polo* is in the possession of the BBC, has been fully restored and is sitting on iTunes awaiting a release. While this is evidently not the case, the idea that it one day might be is tantalising enough to keep vintage *Doctor Who* fresh and "alive" in our minds. After all these years, that is an achievement in itself.

ART: SIMON BRETT



REVIEWS

STARBURST PEERS
INTO THE VORTEX
FOR THE BEST OF
THIS MONTH'S
WHO RELEASES

THE ANNUAL YEARS



THE ANNUAL YEARS – A CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD DISTRIBUTOR DOCTOR WHO ANNUALS

AUTHOR: PAUL MAGRS / PUBLISHER: OVBESSE BOOKS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

For 21 Christmases between 1965 and 1985, the children of the United Kingdom were able to indulge in a seasonal Doctor Who treat without any recourse to their television sets, and with no evidence of a Kylie Minogue or a Giant Spider-Lady in sight. Well, apart from maybe a Zilgan or two, that is.

I'm talking about the mad universe of the World Distributor's annual of course, that yearly insanity that pretended to be Doctor Who but never quite convinced. I myself partook of the experience in the early 1980s, during a period in which the television series was taking itself possibly a little too seriously, and I must confess to having occasionally wished it was the stories in the annuals that I was watching instead...

I digress. After decades of independent episode guides for everything from televised Doctor Who to the audio dramas of Big Finish and lately even *The Target Book*, it now feels inevitable that those old annuals should be dusted off and given the same treatment, although prior to the publication of *The Annual Years*, you might well be considered just as mad as the stories they contained for thinking so. Long considered an external activity bearing only the most vague of resemblances to the series from which they had sprung, the Doctor Who annuals have become something of an embarrassment to a fandom that has lately been more used to spin-off media that treats its source more reverentially. In his opening chapter to *The Annual Years*, Paul Magrs spells out how this might not have ended up the case. "Right at the very start the annual was going to reflect

what Doctor Who was like on TV. Fidelity was the key," Magrs informs us, in an informative and evocative dance through the history of the publication and its background.

This opening chapter, entitled – rather cheekily – *The Making of Doctor Who*, serves both to dispel the myths that have surrounded the World Distributor series (as well as to underline the reasons why the character became known as "Dr Who" in the books), and also to canonise those contributors whose place in the pantheon of Doctor Who creatives has hitherto remained unreserved. John Pemberton's name might not trip so readily on the tongue as Victor Pemberton's, but his responsibility for the enchantment of several generations of children is surely the greater. *The Making of Doctor Who* forms only as an aperitif to the main body of *The Annual Years*, but it is a fascinating and thoroughly researched account of the history behind the volumes, and an absolute must-read for enthusiasts of the television series, even if – in fact, especially if – they are as ignorant of the work that went into producing the annuals as I was.

We then come to the main course, and this is perhaps where I found *The Annual Years* a slight disappointment, preferring my histories of the show's bygone years to take the form more of critique than simple episode guide. But this is also where Paul Magrs comes into his element, and demonstrates the wisdom in having an established writer of fiction such as Magrs as the author of such a book. For instead of simply taking us by the hand and walking us through

the many and varied contents of the twenty Doctor Who annuals (and several related World Distributors' titles), Magrs' droll commentary provides all the analysis necessary to thoroughly understand quite what a bizarre but enjoyable universe World Distributors presented. The summaries for the stories contained in each of the books are written with a wry eye for the absurdities of the plots, but Magrs stops becoming short of pointing out such incongruousness for the reader. After all, for some of us these stories are cherished if all-but-forgotten memories, while for others, ignorant of the source material, Magrs' sardonic synopses are evocative of an alternative account in which the series might have taken on an altogether more peculiar approach – something to which the new series has on occasion seen fit to pay homage.

The main chapters fill themselves out with a number of shorter sub-sections, detailing the dovetailing between annual and television canon – and the divergences thereof – in a similarly light turn of prose. Magrs is keen to point out the similarities as much as the differences in the characters we know, and the *What I Learned From...* segments are as amusing as they are would-be illuminating.

Magrs then makes the last section of his tribute into a series of appendices collecting together interviews with some of the authors and artists who worked on the annuals, and a selection of letters both to and from the people at World Distributors who produced them, and thus *The Annual Years* ends as eye-opening and as absorbingly as it began.

To many, the World Distributor annuals represent no more than a footnote in the many-avenued atlas of Doctor Who, but for countless thousands of children they symbolised the potency of Christmas, and were every bit as effective as the *Target* books in awakening that latent fan-gene. Here then, is Paul Magrs' particular, and personal – but not excessively so – account of those special, in oh so many ways, publications. *The Annual Years* is a volume that, thanks to its idiosyncratic but very accessible approach, will grace the shelves of any self-respecting Doctor Who fan, whether versed in the subject matter or not – and should slot happily in between *The Television Companion* and *The Amazing World of Doctor Who*. Just make sure you have enough money left in your account for a potentially expensive excursion to eBay before you start reading it, though...

J.R. SOUTHAL

★★★★★★★★★ 8

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VERY BAD THINGS

by Andrew Marshall

Adapted with ever-decreasing fidelity from Charlaine Harris' SOUTHERN VAMPIRE MYSTERIES, over the last six years TRUE BLOOD has, for better or worse, been a mainstay of popular culture. As the seventh and final season approaches, we take a look back at the series' growth from Southern Gothic murder mystery to full-on supernatural soap opera, along with its abundance of boobs, butts, boning, booze, bizarreness, and yes, blood...

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Like many fantasy shows that take their inspiration from a novel series, *True Blood* began with more or less a direct adaptation of the saga's opening instalment. The TV version of *Dead Until Dark* introduced us to telepathic waitress Sookie Stackhouse and her small town life in Louisiana, set some time after vampires announced their existence to the world. Into her bar and her life walks vampire Bill Compton, whom her inability to mind read offers a welcome break from the incessant babbling and depraved lechery of everyday human thoughts.

Through their burgeoning relationship vampire lore is explained, along with the rules of undead society.

Plot-wise there's a serial killer on the loose targeting women who sleep with vampires and as they all share a connection to Sookie's bed-hopping brother, Jason, he becomes the prime suspect as the deaths are investigated by drunken local detective Andy Bellefleur. However, it's eventually revealed to be the work of labourer Rene, fiancée of Sookie's co-worker Arlene.

In a divergence from waitressing for the lovesick Sam, Sookie and her telepathy are

FANGS FOR THE MEMORIES

Our ten favourite *TRUE BLOOD* moments from the past six seasons...

AIDS BURGER

An extrovert gay man in a small southern town, Lafayette has most likely been on the receiving end of abuse all his life, and as a result has learned to give as good as he gets. After a trio of drunken rednecks think that ordering a burger without the AIDS is the height of hilarity, in response he calmly picks a fight and when they retaliate he beats the crap out of them. These people only understand violence, not reason, and Lafayette's message is clear: fuck with me and I will fuck you up five times harder. Also: 'Tip your waitress'.



ALPHA-OFF

After Eric drains Sookie's faerie godmother Claudine and gains temporary resistance to sunlight, Sookie and Alcide find him frolicking in a woodland pond, tripping balls on the faerie blood and requiring some persuasion to return. Not only does the moment joyfully feature a situation where two of the show's hunkiest men engage in an alpha male growing match, but also plausibly engineers it so that they are both naked at the time. Someone pass the ice cubes.

hired by vampire sheriff Eric Northman to investigate theft at his bar, which introduced Alexander Skarsgård to the world at large and made increasing millions of women wonder where the hell he's been all their lives. When the uncovered vampire is staked by Bill to save Sookie (the first in a theme frequently recurring throughout the entire series), as punishment he is forced to turn a young woman named Jessica, who remains somewhat irritating and childish.

After her alcoholic mother is cleansed by a charlatan exorcist, Sookie's abrasive best friend Tara ends up in the care of the mysterious Maryann, who was first seen by Andy wandering naked by the side of the road in the company of a pig.

While in prison, Jason receives a visit from a salesman for the Fellowship of the Sun, a totally-not-just-anti-vampire church in the same way UKIP is a totally-not-just-anti-immigration political party. Seeing as he hasn't got much going on upstairs, it doesn't take much convincing for him to agree to join.

In the last moments we discover the series has adopted the annoying climactic format of every Syfy show ever, ending the season on an abrupt but easily resolved cliffhanger.



THINGS TO DO IN DALLAS WHEN YOU'RE DEAD

In the first of innumerable plot deviations, Lafayette escaped his novel-ordained death (Merlotte's short-order cooks always dying was practically a running joke) to remain fabulous for the rest of the series. The dead body discovered was instead that of the fake psychic, the brutal murder shocking the small community into freefall.

Godric, a vampire sheriff and Eric's maker, has gone missing and is suspected to have been kidnapped by the Fellowship of the Sun. Eric sends Bill and Sookie to Dallas to investigate.

Jason advances in the Fellowship's ranks at an alarming rate, soon befriending the organisation's leader Steve Newlin and his Southern Belle of a wife Sarah, who begins as a typical gospel-touting preacher's spouse, but is soon revealed to be as batshit crazy as she is crazy-hot, first

giving him a handjob in the bath and then screwing him in the church.

After being taken and interrogated by the Fellowship due to a treacherous familiar within the Dallas vampires, Sookie is saved by Godric's timely appearance. After defusing a show of macho dick-waving between the Dallas vampires and the Fellowship, it transpires that he allowed himself to be taken and that his death by ritual sunbanning would atone for two millennia of cruelty and promote peaceful relations between humans and vampires, and later goes up like a match tossed into a cloud of carbon monoxide.

Along the way we also properly meet Bill's maker Lorena, who was summoned by Eric to keep Bill out of the way and give us some backstory on his past.

Meanwhile, Maryann has been slowly taking over Bon Temps by throwing wild parties that progress into frenzied orgies, and only Sam, who has previous history

RUSSELL'S ENTRANCE

Never one to do things by halves, Russell's first appearance in season three immediately tells us everything we need to know about his camp malice. He appears clad in aristocratic hunting garb, riding through a forest astride a pristine white horse, and in less than two minutes his elegant malevolence is unequivocally established by apologising profusely to Bill and extending a gracious greeting to him, before demanding acquiescence in his imprisonment and then executing an underling. The bar for all subsequent introductions was just set impossibly high.



COFFIN RIDE

Oh, Ginger. Fangtasia's waitress might have been reliably unreliable and something of a running joke ("I know that scream"), but she also showed a few moments of loyalty and tenderness, such as holding Pam's bucking coffin closed when she was being pulled out by Antonia's spell to force all vampires into the daylight.

TALKING VOODOO DOLL

After seeing Jesus's brijo face in the aftermath of a V trip, Lafayette begins hallucinating cloth homunculi, the most memorable of which is a voodoo doll with a shock of scarlet hair and an off-the-shoulder strap chanting his name in a demonic voice. Equal parts brief, funny and creepy.



SOOKIE'S HERITAGE

The ongoing mystery of Sookie's true nature was addressed late in season three, with the traditional soap opera revelation that Bill knew who Sookie was before they met and was sent to investigate her hitherto unknown supernatural heritage, which immediately demanded answers to a barrage of questions. Sookie, with her dauntless ability to oversimplify any situation, reduces the revelation to six simple and inadvertently hilarious words: "I'm a fairy? How fucking lame."



with her, is suspicious. Daphne, Maryann's minion, informs him she is a maenad, an immortal follower of the Greek god Dionysus who is attempting to summon the deity. Sam shapeshifts into a bull to trick her into believing she succeeded, gouges her in the chest with a horn before shifting back and ripping out her heart.

As the series closes, Bill proposes to Sookie but during the ninety seconds it takes her to compose herself in the bathroom and consider his offer, he has been kidnapped.

BEST LAID SCHEMES

Bill has been taken by Russell Edgington, vampire King of Mississippi, as part of a plot to take over Louisiana, but also takes an interest in Sookie after learning of her strange abilities. He eventually learns (along with everyone else) that she is part faerie, hence the vampires' hitherto unjustified obsession with her and that her blood grants resistance to sunlight.

Sookie searches for Bill with the help of

hunky lycanthrope Alcide, but is soon taken by Russell's werewolf allies to the king's mansion, where Bill is being physically and emotionally tortured by Lorena.

After Eric kills Russell's lover Talbot, Russell's already questionable sanity is irrevocably snapped and, in one of the most memorable moments of the entire series, he kills a news anchor on TV and proceeds to declare war on humanity. He is eventually weakened after drinking Sookie's blood and staying too long in the sunlight, then bound in silver chains and buried in cement.

In other events, Jason ends up in a community of inbred redneck werepanthers, Sam searches for his birth parents and discovers a younger brother, and Sookie feels betrayed by everyone lying to her and goes to live in fairyland.

DOUBLE DOUBLE TOIL AND TROUBLE

Sookie returns from Faerie after her hosts turn out to be a little possessive, a few hours by her perspective but an entire year in the real world.

Upon learning that a group of Wiccans

have succeeded in bringing a dead bird back to life, Bill, now the King of Louisiana, orders Eric to break up the coven lest their control over the deceased increase. Eric pays them a visit, only for the coven leader Marnie to become possessed by Antonia, the 300-year-old ghost of a witch executed during the Spanish Inquisition, who erases his memory with a curse. Reduced to little more than a playful teenager, Sookie develops romantic feelings for him now that he's sensitive and vulnerable rather than cold and controlling, inevitably leading to some steamy blonde-on-blonde action. Events escalate until an all-out war between witches and vampires threatens to break out, resolved only by Antonia and the ghost of Sookie's gran reining in the power-mad Marnie.

Subplots tangential to the main story include Arlene's new baby being haunted by the ghost of a madwoman, Alcide dealing with werewolf pack politics and Sam's brother Tommy causing minor havoc after becoming a skinwalker when he kills his abusive parents.



RECURRING THEME

True Blood's resident deadpan snarker Pam has always been one to say exactly what's on her mind, and in the penultimate episode of season four, Bill and Eric agree to hold off a bazooka attack on Marnie's magic shop in order to save Sookie's life, despite the angry dead witch and angrier live one gearing up to go thermonuclear on vampire kind. With an observation as crude as it is cutting, she declares "Holy shit, gentlemen. Do not tell me you'd put our entire species at risk for a gash in a sundress."



TWISTED SEX

Imprisoned in Russell's mansion, Bill tells his ex-lover/sire Lorena how much he despises her for taking away everything he was and, much to her delight, throws her on the bed for a bout of angry, vampire intercourse. In a fit of fury, he then proceeds to wrench her head around 180 degrees. And they carry on.

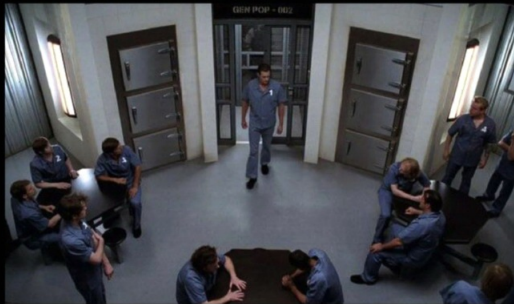
SWEET DREAMS

Soft lighting and porn music awake Sookie dozing on the sofa in a skimpy red gown. Eric and Bill show up to declare their love and begin fighting over her, and she placates them by suggesting that "the two of you be mine." Just as she drops her gown to the floor and offers each of them a jugular the dream abruptly ends as Sookie jolts awake.



NEWSNIGHT

After the death of his lover Talbot, Russell goes off the deep end, violently hijacks a live newscast and delivers a tirade against the inferiority of humanity and the "futile symbols of permanence to quell your quivering, spineless souls." The vengefulness gradually crescendos and is capped off with the menacing promise "We will eat you after we eat your children," before Russell jauntily declares "Now time for the weather. Tiffany?"



RETURN OF THE KING

Eric and Bill are taken by the vampire Authority for killing the American Vampire League spokesperson Nan Flanigan after she wanted to go after Sookie. To avoid execution, they offer to bring in Russell Edgington who, being one of the show's most interesting characters with some of the best lines, has inevitably escaped his concrete tomb and is just as camp and twice as nuts. With the aid of Sookie and her faerie powers, they discover his location and he is brought in for execution, only for a sect of the Authority who share his vampire dominance ideology to choose this moment to stage a coup d'état and establish a new regime.

Russell, Bill and the Authority chancellors – who include Eric's vamp-sister Nora and Biblical seductress Salomé Agrippa – descend into religious fervour over the revered blood of original vampire Lilith and engage in a campaign to undo all attempts made for human and vampire coexistence. Eric only resists after receiving a spiritual intervention vision from tattooed emo-boy Godric.

Meanwhile, Sookie delves into her faerie ancestry, much to the utter indifference of the viewers, and discovers she's promised to a vampire named Warlow.

Eric succeeds in killing Russell, but Bill drinks Lilith's blood, dissolves into a puddle of red goo and then rises as some sort of blood god.

DAYS OF MAGIC, NIGHTS OF WAR

Possibly getting sick of the show's morality double standard that sees vampires killing people with impunity and without repercussion, the Louisiana governor declares war on the bloodsuckers, rounding them up into an experimentation-heavy "vamp-camp," exuding Nazi concentration camp parallels with all the subtlety of a sledgehammer.

Sookie takes a sexy injured man named Ben back home after encountering him on the roadside, evidently having learned absolutely nothing in the last six years. Turning out to be part-faerie, he joins Sookie, Jason and faerie grandfather Niall in the search for Warlow. In a revelation that

shocks almost nobody, it transpires that he in fact is Warlow and that the sinister, behatted, leather-clad Rob Zombie clone who emerged menacingly from a portal in episode two has now transformed into a prettyboy *EastEnders* reject for the sake of cheap misdirection.

Bill attempts to do something with his deific status and embarks upon a quest to save vampires from a vision of them all burning in sunlight, and after drinking some of Warlow's faerie/vampire hybrid blood that allows for daywalking, his messiah complex is fulfilled when he allows those who didn't escape the camp during an uprising to feed on him and save themselves.

After Warlow is killed during a combined effort to save Sookie from his clutches, a six-month timeskip establishes that Hepatitis-V, a manufactured virus that makes vampires die in black-blooded agony and with which manufactured TruBlood was intentionally tainted, has now spread into an epidemic that turns vampires into slaving, blood-crazed monsters. Well, more than they already were.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Going by the end of the last season and what little can be gleaned from preview footage, it seems for a finale *True Blood* is going for a post-apocalyptic, *Walking Dead* vibe. Although the showrunners have been quick to point out that the Hep-V infected are not vampire zombies, everyone will likely refer to them as such regardless. Since all featured characters were now in the vicinity of Bon Temps the story will likely be far more streamlined, without the tenuous connections required to justify secondary characters' continued presence in the increasingly sprawling narrative. ✦

TRUE BLOOD – SEASON 7 airs in the UK on FOX from July 7th.



WHAT A BUNCH OF A-HOLES...

MARVEL
GUARDIANS
OF THE GALAXY

BY ADAM STARKEY

WELCOME TO THE COSMIC AGE! THIS SUMMER SEES MARVEL STUDIOS' CINEMATIC UNIVERSE FINALLY LIVE UP TO ITS GALACTIC PROMISE, WITH A FILM THAT BUNDLES TOGETHER A HALF-HUMAN THIEF, A FEARED ASSASSIN, A TREE WITH LIMITED VOCABULARY, A HATE-CONSUMED MANIAC AND A GUN-TOTING RACCOON. CONFUSED? DON'T BE. STARBURST IS HERE TO BRING YOU THE LOWDOWN...

While often referred to as the space Avengers, the Guardians of the Galaxy are a group of 'heroes' that aren't so clearly defined as their Earth/Asgard counterparts. Good guys? Questionable. Bad? Bit of a stretch. Here to spice up the crowded superhero movie formula? Most definitely. If you're unfamiliar with the Guardians, the centre focus here is Peter Quill. A swaggering mix of human and alien played by *Parks and Recreation*'s Chris Pratt, who was abducted from his home in Missouri as a child in the 1980s and raised by a group of smugglers called the Ravagers. His criminal exploits across the galaxy see a mild growth in his reputation and an even larger spurt for his ego as the self-proclaimed legendary outlaw, Star-Lord. As his antics continue in outer space he soon finds himself hunted by Ronan the Accuser, a member of the deadly Kree race working for supervillain Thanos (remember the giant, grinning purple fella at the end of *Avengers Assemble?*), after stealing a coveted orb that

he so desperately seeks. This leads to an unlikely allegiance with the rest of the colourful cast, who each have their own motivations and troubled history.

Gamora, played by *Avatar*'s Zoe Saldana (who colour switches here from blue to green), might be the most complicated of the bunch. She's the adoptive daughter of Thanos and a trained assassin under his service, alongside Ronan and fellow contract killers Nebula and Korath. Touted as the deadliest assassin in the galaxy, her allegiance starts to shift once she questions the plans of the evil puppeteer lurking upstairs. But she soon discovers that reputations aren't as easy to turnaround as her own motivations.

Also keeping it green is Drax the Destroyer, an angry whirlwind of vengeance played by WWE star Dave Bautista who scours the galaxy for Ronan after he tragically murders his family. Blessed with super-human strength, an obscene amount of

muscle and some swish knife-wielding skills, Drax is the hot-headed warrior that leaps before he looks. That, coupled with his intense emotional issues, makes him both a deadly asset and a potentially dangerous liability for the galactic group.

Then we arrive at the dynamo-duo who sail the Guardians pass diversity checks. Groot, the powerhouse humanoid tree voiced by Vin Diesel is the last of his *Flora Colossus* species. Powers include rejuvenating from a tiny twig, packing a massive swing and drawing a surprising amount of character from his only phrase, "I am Groot". His transition to the big screen has seen him acquire a more cutesy makeover in comparison to the comic books, but he's a fierce beast underneath that exterior. Especially when it comes to protecting his hairy partner in crime.

While Quill represents the nucleus holding together this band of misfits, we're



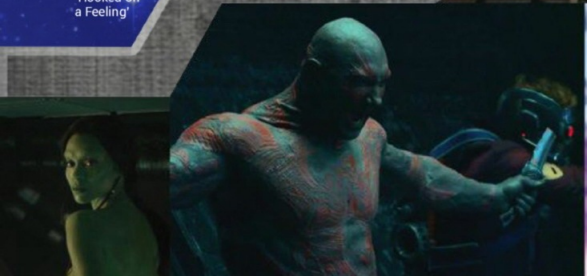
promised Rocket will be the bulging anthropomorphic heart of the movie. The feisty raccoon, who also happens to be a marksman, expert tactician and renowned pilot, looks set to become a worldwide sensation once the film releases. A genetic experiment gone wrong, or beautifully right depending on your perspective, he's a cocky and smart-mouthed mammal that rocks some serious weaponry on the battlefield. Packing the charm-offensive vocals of Bradley Cooper behind the CGI whiskers won't hurt his popularity chances with audiences either.

If this bizarre selection of characters somehow isn't enough, the movie also boasts an incredible supporting cast. John C. Reilly and Glenn Close are pairing up to play leaders of the Nova Corps, the military police force for the Xander region which act like S.H.I.E.L.D. only a little less stuffy. Benicio del Toro shows up as Taneleer Tivan, aka The Collector, as seen in the post-credits sequence for *Thor: The Dark World*. Described as the 'outer-space Liberace' by director James Gunn, he's the flamboyant gatherer of powerful and magical items from across the galaxy. Someone the Guardians will be undoubtedly looking to pursue once they realise the true scale of the Thanos threat. *The Walking Dead*'s Michael Rooker also features as Ravager leader and Quill's father figure Yondu, a typically tough-loving alien that raised the young Star-Lord.

The villainous line-up is just as impressive. *The Hobbit* and *Pushing Daisies* star Lee Pace is central baddie Ronan the Accuser, with wingman support coming from *Blood Diamond*'s Djimon Hounsou as Korath the Pursuer and Karen Gillan as the terrifying Nebula. Stripped of her ginger locks made famous by her role as Amy Pond in *Doctor Who*, she's now a bald, robotic, blue-headed killing machine who was adopted by Thanos at the same time as Gamora. So expect a few emotionally charged showdowns as the pair try and resolve the ever-common evil overlord daddy issues.

This brash collection of characters needs an equally ballsy director, and James Gunn looks set to deliver a much needed tonal shake-up to the Marvel Cinematic Universe. His previous work includes horror-comedy *Slither* and the terrifically underrated *Super*, which saw Rainn Wilson and Ellen Page violently incapacitate criminals with a steely wrench under a superhero disguise. It's dark, hilarious and incredibly off-beat, a trademark description for almost the entirety of his previous work. Honorary Marvel guru Joss Whedon even personally requested an injection of Gunn's style into the *Guardians* script after a first draft reading. Gunn complied, boldly replying, "It's your funeral!"

One area that's seen a distinctive Gunn spin is the soundtrack. Playing on the role of Peter Quill's Walkman as one of the last remaining connections to his time on Earth, a large chunk of the movie will feature '80s power ballad anthems blasting over the action. Blue Suede's 'Hooked on a Feeling'



has already been resurrected in the first trailer with 'ooga shakass' and gut-surgings yells aplenty. Other classic songs confirmed include

'Spirit in the Sky' by Norman Greenbaum and Rupert Holmes' 'Escape' which will feature in some capacity. How large a role these tunes play in the final film is still yet to be revealed, but we'll quietly hope for a Rocket-led space battle sequence with Starship's 'We Built This City' crying over the carnage!

Guardians of the Galaxy is essentially a pretty huge gamble for Marvel. Taking on this massive cast of relatively unknown characters, the self-aware tone and Gunn-centric script doesn't scream a surefire mainstream Hollywood success for the studio. Yet it's these aspects which demonstrate an exciting confidence in the studio moving forward. As the first major risk they've taken with a smaller property, its success could potentially lead to other 'experimental' directors taking on obscure Marvel characters in the future. A Richard Ayode-led *Doctor Strange*? *Thor 3* to Ben Wheatley? Quentin Tarantino for *Black Panther*? It's an experiment which could open the gates to a world of unrestrained Marvel cinematic madness!

While it's certainly going to be a different kind of superhero movie, Gunn's inspirations for the *Guardians* show he isn't shooting for an alternative or niche movie experience. Flirting with *Star Wars* comparisons in recently released posters and citing *Raiders of the Lost Ark* as a major influence, this is a film aiming to be loved by a wide audience in the realm of big blockbuster entertainment. Labelled as a space-epic adventure film, it hopes to bring together the vivid colours of '50s and '60s pulp sci-fi movies and combine them with darker aesthetics that emerged with the release of *Alien* and *Blade Runner* in the 1980s.

These influences are on full display in the movies vehicle designs. Peter Quill's ship *The Milano* has been described by production designer Charles Wood as the *Guardians'* Millennium Falcon. It's certainly a striking a design, with turquoise blue and orange colours coating

a sleek frame - reminiscent of a diving bird. But many other spaceships are set to feature in the film too, with hundreds designed digitally for use in the films dazzling-looking space battle sequences.

As the last film before the highly anticipated second superhero mash-up *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, the *Guardians* will most likely deliver a heap of teasers to connect the space universe into the events occurring on Earth. We'll finally get a better look at Thanos beyond just a dramatic head-spin glimpsed at the end of the original *Avengers*, and while seeing the *Guardians* in the next *Avengers* might be a steep ask at this point, a team-up against a much larger threat like Thanos later down the line makes wonderful sense. Expect to see some early groundwork laid here for a much darker and sinister Thanos plot in Phase Three.

If your interest in the cosmic wing of the Marvel universe has been thoroughly tickled, the *Guardians of the Galaxy* film is based largely on the ongoing comic run by Brian Bendis. The first collected book titled 'Cosmic Avengers' and its follow-up 'Angela' serves as a great modern introduction to the team, capturing each characters unique quirks and personality in a beautifully drawn adventure. It also stars Iron Man as part of the ensemble, which may be indicative of movie plans for the Tony Stark character after the events of *Iron Man 3*.

The team, however, hasn't always featured this brilliant mix of characters. First appearing in *Marvel Super-Heroes* in 1969 written by Arnold Drake, the original team comprised of astronaut Major Vance Astro, a soldier from Jupiter called Captain Charlie-27, a crystalline being from Pluto called Martinex T'Naga and Yondu the Ravager. These characters appeared randomly across a number of different comic book series with other anti-heroes like Starhawk, Replica and Nikki jumping in and out of the group over the years. They even teamed up with the *Avengers* on multiple occasions

when it came to tackling a particularly troublesome foe.

It wasn't until 1990 that the *Guardians of the Galaxy* finally had a comic-book series to call their own. A team living life in the 31st century written and drawn by Jim Valentino, it soon became the 'classic' *Guardians* series that is still loved by many comic book writers today. The art-style and text echo the yesteryears of Marvel and might be a little dated for some, but it is still a worthwhile read for anyone who wants to experience a historic slice of the original team first-hand.

For the early works on the current *Guardians* roster, you should turn to the *Annihilation* and *Annihilation Conquest* mini-series. These served as preludes to the 2008 team and introduced characters like Star-Lord, Rocket and Gamora into the *Guardians'* universe. Writers Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning then relaunched the team in another self-titled run, with crossover storylines like the *War of Kings* and the *Realm of Kings* cropping up once the series really took flight. While they're pretty difficult to find in print at a reasonable price today, they're definitely worth checking out online if you're looking for some modern material outside of the works by Bendis.

If everything from the promo footage to the pre-release buzz is to be believed however, by August it will become pretty difficult to ignore this bunch of alternative superheroes. They might not have the iconic suits of Iron Man, Thor or Captain America to make cosplay fans go wild, but the *Guardians* are standing tall for an entirely new era of the MCU. Bold, bright, brutal and a little bit bizarre, if James Gunn is right to liken the *Avengers* to the Beatles and the *Guardians* to The Rolling Stones, then make way for the Honky Tonk parade! Quill, Gamora, Drax, Groot and Rocket look set to deliver unrequited satisfaction upon the world, only question is, are you ready to take it?

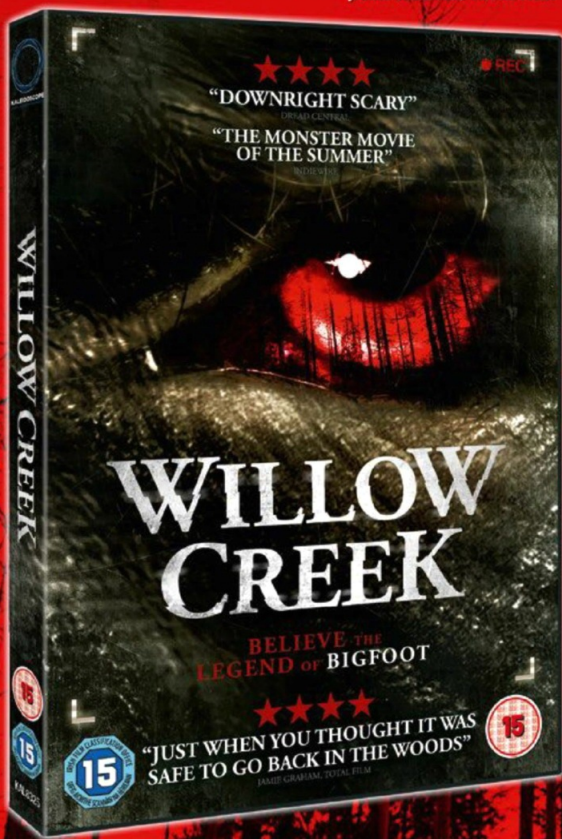
GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY opens in UK cinemas July 31st, and will be reviewed in a future issue.





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1 in 100

Words: Paul Mount



The CW Network's new science-fiction adventure *THE 100* has been one of the hits of the US 2013/14 TV season, receiving a swift renewal for a second series following its debut in March. The series, telling of the exploits of a group of young people sent back down to the ravaged surface of the Earth a century after a devastating holocaust has left the planet uninhabitable, finally arrives on UK shores in July. *STARBURST* recently spoke to the show's brooding resident bad boy Bobby Morley (who plays the darkly-charismatic Blake Bellamy) to find out what it takes to be one in a hundred...

STARBURST: Tell us all about *The 100* and your character Blake Bellamy...

Bobby Morley: It's 97 years after a nuclear apocalypse and Humankind have pretty much obliterated themselves on Earth; all that's left are twelve space stations which came together to form the Ark. But the Ark is dying and they have to figure out a way to save the human race so they decide to send 100 juvenile delinquents down to the Earth. My character Blake Bellamy happens to get on the transport drop ship and within the first few moments of seeing him we realise that he's down there to look after his sister. However, Bellamy has this hidden agenda, an overriding pressure to take control of the 100 kids. As soon as he gets down there he tries to stamp his authority over this group of delinquents.

Does this mean Blake is a bad guy?

I think he falls pretty firmly in the grey area. Of course I empathise with him because I play him and I don't think he's bad, but for a fair chunk of it he seems like he's the villain – but for good reasons.

So was it the character's moral ambiguity which drew you to the role in the first place?
Absolutely. The fact that he does sit in this grey area makes it a great role for me to play and when I read the pilot Blake Bellamy was the one character who stuck out for me the most and I was really excited about it. The pilot was so intense and the way that it ends is a classic cliffhanger. The fact that Bellamy has such light and shade and so much pent up anger and resentment was really attractive to me. It sounds odd because it's not what you look for in a human being but maybe it's a way for me to exorcise that part of myself! But Bellamy definitely has that in spades and it's a joy to get to explore that darker side of his psyche as the series progresses.

Did you know what direction the character was going to go when you started filming or has it been a surprise to you as the scripts have rolled in?

You shoot the pilot and then you have some time off before you hear whether it's going to be picked-up or whatnot; I'd hoped that



there was some sort of explanation for Bellamy's character throughout the series and the way that he's unfolded throughout the season really is quite amazing. His journey, or 'arc', throughout the season is beautiful; we've established quite a lot of his backstory and you find out the reasons why he's become what he has. So not only do you get an explanation, there's also a form of redemption way, way down the track. The way the writers have unfolded him is quite extraordinary and I never thought that I'd get to play such a well-developed character.

What about the physicality of filming the series? You're on location the whole time and it's a pretty action-oriented role...

We shoot in a forest and the poor crew have to drag the equipment up the mountain, but filming out there only serves to further the show. It gets pretty cold out there in the winter in Vancouver and that aspect, along with all the physical stuff is great because it helps to get you into the role, being out in the elements. Coming from Australia I've never really spent much time in a forest but

once you're in there it's very invigorating being out in nature and in such a beautiful setting. But there's been a lot of cold nights when we're standing around the heater and waiting to go home!

The 100 airs in the US on The CW Network, which tends to aim its shows at a specific teen audience. But The 100 is notably more graphic and gutsy... episode four is a real game-changer and promises a much grittier and ruthless tone for the series. Would you agree that the show is quite a bit darker than the audience might be expecting?

I know that our executive producer Jason Rothenberg wanted it to go 'dark' and I think The CW saw the potential in the show and believed that it required that kind of intensity. The CW and Jason really pushed to go to the next level and open up this world of reality. I think it's probably a risky show for the network but they love it and I know they're always pushing for this next level of intensity. Episode four is definitely the one where Jason says we really 'found' the show and I think the cast and crew felt,

when we were shooting it, that it was tense and dark and disturbing.

The show's 'survivalist' theme was always bound to invite comparison with the Hunger Games franchise; young people on the run in a hostile environment. Do those comparisons bother you?

That's come up quite a lot but to be honest I haven't watched a lot of *The Hunger Games*, but while there are elements of it, the premise is really completely different. Yes, there are young people in the forest trying to survive but I wouldn't say it's necessarily like *The Hunger Games* or a TV version of *The Hunger Games*; it's not a 'game' when they're down there, this is very much about survival on a violent and dangerous planet.

Do you think the show offers a note of optimism for the future of Mankind?

I feel it's saying that there's always hope for humanity and that there needs to be a sense of community and togetherness and unity for us to work together. What it has to say about humanity is great, but even though it can be



quite brutal and violent, the ultimate story we're trying to tell is that humanity has to have compassion and understanding.

Would Bobby Morley make a good survivor in a 100-style scenario?

I like to think I'd do ok! I do a lot of camping and outdoorsy stuff but I don't know how much that'd help in this situation because I really believe that if you're down on the ground with a hundred people it's more about management than your survival skills. I think I'd be okay, but maybe getting everybody else to work might be tricky!

Are you a science-fiction fan?

This is the first sci-fi thing I've ever done and I've never really thought of myself as a big science-fiction person, although as a kid I was really into *X-Men* and *Dragonball-Z* and stuff like that. *Star Trek* and that sort of stuff has never really appealed to me but as I've been shooting the show and watching a lot more sci-fi I love the mythology they can create and that to me is really interesting, like an anthropological study of human nature. Fascinating.

The 100 will be back for a second season; are you sticking around for the long haul?

I love playing Bellamy and as long as they keep writing good stuff and we get renewed then absolutely! It's my first American production and it came to me pretty quickly after moving to the States and I think I've been really lucky in getting into something I really enjoy and which I'm proud of. As long as I'm happy and want to keep doing this and we keep producing work we're all proud of then that's it, because I think that's what we all want to do.

And what are we likely to see you doing beyond *The 100*?

I want to do things I'm proud of; tell stories that are worth telling. Sometimes that's hard to come by, so it's going to take some time to find the right stuff, really settle myself in the States and establish my name. Career-wise I'd love to do some great features and indies, stuff like that. But for the moment I'm very happy here at The CW with *The 100*.

Finally, why should STARBURST readers find time for *The 100*?

Across the series they'll get a lot of different things; a lot of action and romance, but ultimately they can expect a level of intensity which just keeps increasing and the story doesn't stop, it moves so fast. I haven't seen the stuff that's airing now [in the US], so when I watch it I just want to keep watching so the story cracks along at a really fast pace. There's not a dull episode! From episode four onwards, when we really find the show, it just explodes! I'd tell your readers to buckle in and get ready for it!



THE 100 airs on E4 in the UK from July.

"This is very much about survival on a violent and dangerous planet."



HORROR Obscura

Join the miniscule Martin Unsworth as we take a look at some horrifyingly memorable short films...

IT'S NOT THE LENGTH THAT COUNTS...

Short films are a brilliant way of learning the moviemaking process, and have always been part of a standard film school education for directors and artists. However, digital equipment has made the process even more accessible and with online crowd funding proving popular, not to mention the ease of sharing the finished product, more people are venturing behind the lens to make their cinematic dreams a reality.

A fascinating early example is *Return to Glennascaul* (1953), written and directed by actor/theatre director Hilton Edwards. With producer Micheál MacLiamóir, he had managed the Gale Theatre in Dublin in the thirties when a sixteen-year-old Orson Welles worked there. So when Welles was having trouble making his version of *Othello* in the early fifties (the production took over three years and was eventually funded from his own pocket), he starred in this spooky Irish short as a favour. Welles appears as himself, narrating a tale of meeting a man whose car had broken down on a remote Irish road one chilly winter's night. "I'm having problems with the distributor", he complains as he graciously accepts a lift from the actor, who gives a rue smile and responds, "I too have had problems with my distributor" - a none-too-veiled dig at the Hollywood system which continually beleaguered his endeavours. The man recounts a similar night a year earlier, when he picked up two young women on that very stretch of road. They took him back to their home, Glennascaul, where he got warm and enjoyed a drink. When he left, he realised he'd left his cigarette case, so he turned around, but found the grounds overgrown and the house boarded up and deserted. Although it's a routine ghost story, it's very enjoyable. The stilted acting from the women only adds to the eeriness, which is also heightened by the impressive cinematography, filling the screen with deep shadows and creepy flickering lanterns. Welles' appearance has a self-aware feel to it, including some faux-uncomfortable glances to the camera, and in the narration, which seems to sum up his frustration at the delays in the shooting of *Othello*.

In 1978, a young Sam Raimi progressed from 8mm spoofs of *The Three Stooges* to *Within The Woods*. Two couples are terrorised in a remote house when an evil spirit possesses one of them. Sound familiar? This was the short Raimi touted around in an attempt to fund *The Evil Dead* (1981). The possessions start because the house is sited on an old Indian burial ground rather than the Necronomicon Ex-Mortis, but many of the familiar moments are present (though it does lack the black humour one would come to expect from Raimi). While it's never been officially available, under-the-counter copies,



Him Indoors



Bruce Campbell & Sam Raimi on the set of *Within The Woods*

despite being of low picture quality, prove that the director's style and ability were keen from that early age.

Before making *Oculus* (reviewed on page 70), writer/director Mike Flanagan had used the idea of a haunted mirror with his 2006 short *Oculus: Chapter 3 - The Man with the Plan*. Scott Graham (who also appears in Flanagan's feature-length mirror shocker as well as his criminally overlooked 2011 film, *Absentia*) plays a man who is convinced that a large ornate mirror was responsible for making his father commit murder. Sat alone in a room, with several video cameras and alarm clocks to remind him to do menial things like eating and changing the tapes, he has the mirror brought in and hopes to catch its true malevolent nature. A stunning work of paranoia and tension building - you jump every time the alarms go off - it certainly sets the standard which we have come to expect from the director.

Other films which later expanded on directors' earlier short versions were equally impressive. *Saw* (2003) was initially a nine-minute, stripped-down version of the film made by James Wan a year later. In this version, writer/actor Leigh Whannell is a survivor of Jigsaw's morality torture games. With the brutal reverse bear-trap attached to his head - ready to snap open and tear his jaw apart - he must

retrieve a key to free himself from the stomach of a dead man lying on the floor. Only, of course, he's not quite dead. Whannell also played Adam, the unfortunate photographer chained up with Carl Elwes' Dr. Gordon in the feature-length version.

Similarly, before making the overlooked but brilliant *Excision* in 2012, writer/director Richard Bates Jr. told the same story in short form in 2008. Tessa Ferrer took the lead role of Pauline, a troubled teen with unrealistic aspirations of being a surgeon. Ironically, the actor would later take a doctor role in the hit TV series, *Grey's Anatomy*. While it keeps the same disturbing ending as the feature version, the visceral, gut-wrenching, unforgettable climax is somewhat diluted by the mother's reaction. It was a wise decision to expand and remake the story, as it works so much better with more time for characterisation. Conversely, when Andrés Muschietti updated his 2008 version of *Mama* to full-length, it didn't seem to retain the essence which made the short absolutely terrifying. Less is, indeed, more.

A fantastic short from 2006, *Criticized*, was a shockingly brutal tale of a young film director who abducts and tortures a critic who had slated his movie; meaning it was turned down by the distribution companies. In his review, the critic states the weapon was as scary as a small paperclip, so the infuriated filmmaker decides the most fitting punishment is to have the very same stationary item stabbed into his eye. Repeatedly. The build-up to the scene, with the camera zooming-in close to the terrified critic's bloodshot eyeball, cutting between it and the nearing paperclip, is a perfect example of how to build tension. And although it's a very visceral scene, the audience actually doesn't see too much in the way of optical trauma. What we do see is enough to turn stomachs and make grown men flinch, however. No doubt there are plenty of unhappy directors who empathise with the gentleman in question, though. It was written and directed by Richard Gale, who despite having made two feature-length action movies, is most famous for his short subjects. In a complete change of pace, his next work would become even more well-known, and a massive hit on the internet as well as festivals. *The Horribly Slow Murderer with the Extremely Inefficient Weapon* (2008) was a madcap comedy, which is presented as an extended trailer with Paul Clemens (*The Beast Within*, 1982) playing Jack, who for an unknown reason is being preyed upon by a demonic killer, The Ginosaji (Brian Rohan, also the disgruntled director in *Criticized*) intent on doing away with him - by hitting him with a spoon. It's ludicrous, but manages to stay funny over the ten-minute duration despite the very limited concept. The Ginosaji seems indestructible, a common horror trope of course, but it's Jack's pitiful frustration which makes it a joy. Being such a success, Gale has revisited the idea with another short, *Spoon Wars* (2011) - which naturally lampoons George Lucas' famous series - as well several other clips, all of which are available on his YouTube channel.

Prior to making a splash with his love letter to grindhouse cinema, *Hobo with a Shotgun* (2011), director Jason Eisener made the ridiculously entertaining *Trevenge* (2008). It's a film which certainly makes one consider ditching the real Christmas tree in favour of a synthetic one, as the ferns rebel in a gratuitous display of gore, including a graphic, taboo-breaking close-up of a baby having its head pummelled! Despite being terribly offensive, it's incredibly funny.



The Horribly Slow Murderer with the Extremely Inefficient Weapon



Trevenge



Split



A great collective of talent, the team behind Bloody Cuts have been producing fantastic short horrors since 2011. Distributed freely on the internet, these films set a high standard for others to follow. Headed by Ben Franklin and Anthony Melton, Bloody Cuts have so far produced eight mini-movies as well as a short for their Indiegogo campaign (which resulted in their latest, *Don't Move*) and one to set the bar for their competition for budding filmmakers, *Dare*. While they are all excellent, it's particularly worthwhile seeking out *Dead Man's Lake*, which subverts the tropes of backwoods-set horror films, and *Don't Move*, which boasts some stunning special effects.

As the use of crowd funding sites such as Kickstarter and Indiegogo increases, the chances of an unknown writer or director getting his film made are becoming more likely. While not all projects succeed in raising their targets, many do and a fair few have already made their mark on the festival circuit and with fans. By raising the funds themselves through like-minded film fans, the artists can be free of the restraints of producers and interfering studios. They also act as great calling cards, leading to bigger things if the finished film goes down well at the numerous film festivals held throughout the world. There was a time when Cannes was the place to be seen. Now there's festivals such as Sundance, SXSW and more importantly for us: smaller, more genre focused events such as FrightFest and Grimmfest in the UK. Practically every major US city has one, all seeking content for their schedules, and the short film has become a staple part of the proceedings, often surpassing the features in popularity.

Raising funds through Sponsume, Paul Davis - director of the brilliant documentary *Beware the Moon: Remembering 'An American Werewolf in London'*, made his first short, *Him Indoors* (2012). Starring Reece Shearsmith as an agoraphobic serial killer, trying to cope following the death of his mother, it's a ludicrous 'why hasn't this been done before' idea, with Shearsmith perfect as the socially isolated Gregory Brewster, full of nervous facial expressions and awkward looks, but unflinchingly brutal when it comes to murder. Gregory is being evicted and will be forced to go 'out there', unless he can come up with another plan. He has decided to invite his new next door neighbour, Lizzie (Pollyanna McIntosh, *The Woman*) for a meal. Things are not going well, however, when Lizzie turns up - a day early. She just needs a break from sorting her house, "I could just do with a good cup of tea" she tells Gregory, "that, or a shag". Looking even more uncomfortable, Gregory offers a cup of tea. Even if you can guess Gregory's plan, the final payoff is as perfect as it comes. It can be seen as part of a special package of shorts on the pay-per-view website, www.thehorrorshow.tv. Davis followed this with *The Body* (2013) in which a murderer (Alfie Allen) takes advantage of Halloween to take the corpse of his latest victim across town to his disposal site. It doesn't go as smooth as he'd hoped due to being inadvertently invited to a party, and meeting a girl (Hannah Tointon). His night goes downhill fast when, as well as a girl, a group of lads take him under their wing. The humour is more subtle in *The Body*, and builds the anxiety as we hope that the audacious murderer will not be caught out with his 'prop'.

The lovely Hannah Tointon also popped up in writer/director James (Cockneys vs. Zombies) Moran's *Crazy For You* (2013), in which a budding romance between Tointon's Jessica and Charlie (former *Doctor Who* companion Arthur Darvill) is in jeopardy due to his unfortunate tendency to kill people when he's faced with polka dots. It's certainly a crowd-pleaser, leaning more towards comedy than scares, but there's nothing wrong with that.

Another crowd-funded venture, *Yellow* (2012), evokes the feel and style of the seventies Italian giallo thrillers, as a man attempts to track down a masked serial killer who is taunting him over the phone. There's some very graphic murders (the opening bathtub killing is particularly nasty), with a young lady having a cut-throat razor slice through her eye à la *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), while another unfortunate woman has a large pair of scissors thrust straight into the palm of her hand, coming out the other side and





Legitimate



Picket



Kitty Kitty

sending blood spraying everywhere. She is finished off when the killer cuts her throat; a gush of plasma showering the foreground. In keeping with the giallo ethic, *Yellow* has an ethereal quality, with a sumptuous, vivid colour scheme. The stylistic tone is strengthened by a fabulous score by Antoni Maiovvi. Director Ryan Haysom and writer/cameraman Jon Britt capture the essence of what makes these cult films so enjoyable, leaving the viewer wishing it could have been expanded to feature length.

2014 promises to be another fantastic year for shorts, and with festival season upon us, what should you look out for? Andy Stewart follows up his 2012 hit *Dysmorphia* (in which a man has a compulsion to self-amputate his limbs, depicted in a painfully realistic manner) with an even more sickening example of body horror, *Split*. Dismayed by his girlfriend leaving, a young man's life - and body - falls apart. Literally. It's akin to a more concise *Thanatomorphose*, only perhaps more relatable. We've all felt bad when loved ones leave. Thankfully, we don't all start having the visible signs of emotional decay as the unfortunate chap in *Split* does. The third and final short in Stewart's 'body horror trilogy', *Ink* is also due later this year. *Done In* is Andy Stephen Kelly's first directing piece after a few years producing (credits include the delightful *Incest Death Squad 2*). It's a simple set-up of a man reflecting on his life as he writes a suicide note, but has a punchline which is as brilliant as it is surprising. Another debut effort is *Call Girl*, from Jill Sixx Gevorgian, and features the talents of Laurence R. Harvey (*The Human Centipede 2 & 3*) and Tristan Risk (*American Mary*). Harvey's character has paid for a high-class hooker for the evening so he can 'entertain' her. Little does she know he has an audience watching along on the other side of his laptop webcam. That, however, isn't the only dodgy thing going down on this night. With a very minimalist approach - we only see what the webcam sees - it's still very effective and will no doubt

be a crowd pleaser. It seems it's all about the women this year, as well as Ms. Sixx, there are new films from both Izzy Lee and Blair Richardson. Lee's earlier short, *Legitimate* (still doing the festival rounds) was an uncompromising indictment of the ludicrous comment made by Todd Akin, a US Representative at the time: "If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to shut that whole thing down". Her response was a cinematic five minutes sticking the proverbial two fingers at that absurd and deeply offensive notion. Still maintaining a social edge, *Picket*, Lee's latest, sees the vile, bigoted, self-proclaimed 'religious' types in the firing range. The sort who protest at funerals and decry gay rights. Don't worry, they get what's coming to them. Richardson's *Kitty, Kitty* is as much relationship drama as it is horror, and will be a familiar situation for many. Except, we hope, the terrifying demon cat at the conclusion. Her earlier short, *First Date* is equally brilliant and worth tracking down - it's essentially a music video (the song is Kill, Kill by Elizabeth Grant, aka Lana Del Rey) of a sexy woman getting ready for her new man. Naturally, things are not what they seem. Jerry Pyle's debut *Burn* (2011) featured a man with his penis in a vice, faced with an unenviable decision. With *Service*, he gives us a unique slant on the home invasion trope. Of course, the denouement isn't as you'd expect. Finally, a film which should be online by the end of October is *The Last Halloween*, a sinister trick-or-treat based horror from Marc Roussel (whose 2010 short *Remote* was a big hit). It's moody, bleak, but ultimately a fun film, which will certainly kickstart any Samhain celebration.

Even if you don't manage to get to any festivals, there's still a chance you could catch these films as they invariably turn up online. It's always worth doing a search on YouTube or Vimeo, as several of the films mentioned and hundreds more besides, can be found. You never know what hidden gem you may uncover. Let us know if you find something good!



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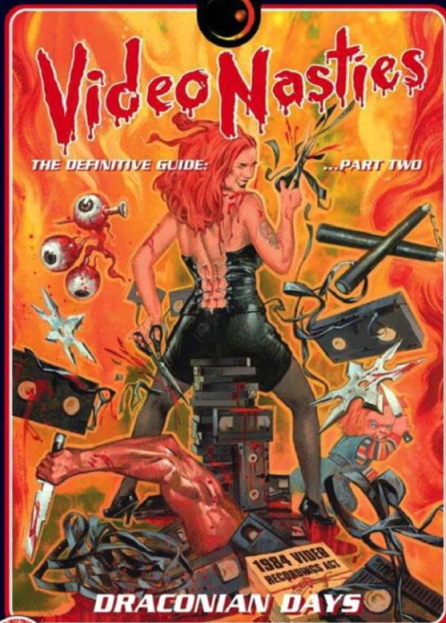
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GORE, LIES & VIDEOTAPE

by Martyn Conterio

STARBURST speaks to director Jake West about his new documentary, VIDEO NASTIES: DRACONIAN DAYS, and the legacy of those dark times for horror cinema...

Thirty years ago this month, the Video Recordings Act 1984 was passed into law. It empowered the British Board of Film Classification with the extra duty of regulating the home video entertainment market (as well as continuing its traditional role regarding cinema releases). The call for new legislation was a direct reaction to the media-stoked campaign against 'video nasties', which occurred in the wake of the VHS revolution. It was a time when you could hire, from your local shop, garage or video van such films as Umberto Lenzi's *Cannibal Ferox* (1981) in uncut form, MPs

and campaigners rallied against the horror genre and forced in changes that saw individuals prosecuted in court for owning or distributing movies.

Jake West had released a documentary, alongside producer Marc Morris, in 2010, titled *Video Nasties: Moral Panics, Censorship & Videotape*, which formed part of *Video Nasties: The Definitive Guide*. Now the pair are set to release a sequel, *Video Nasties: Draconian Days*, made on the anniversary of the Video Recordings Act, which explores the years 1984-1999...

STARBURST: Was there always a follow-up to *Video Nasties: The Definitive Guide* on the cards?

Jake West: Well, it's a strange thing. When we did the first documentary, we were surprised by the level of interest in the subject matter. The first documentary was the story up until the Video Recordings Act in 1984. When we were doing the original interviews, we started talking to people about the effects of the Act. We realised it was such a big topic and that it wouldn't fit into the first documentary, which was, in essence, covering the birth of home video and taking you through the video nasties scare and the DPP [Director of Public Prosecutions] list. We felt there would be a natural progression.

So there was always interest in doing another one?

A lot of people asked: 'Are you going to follow it up?' We were initially thinking, 'Yeah, we could do', but we needed to go back and do more research. So the next documentary goes from 1984 to 1999.

James Ferman was in charge of the BBFC during those years. What do you think of his role there and his legacy?

The thing about James Ferman ... he definitely overstepped the bounds of what one man should be doing. He got increasingly like a dictator and was enforcing his own views on what should and shouldn't be released. There are classic examples of that, the films *Ferman* wouldn't release, like *The Exorcist*, *Straw Dogs* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. He didn't like them and it felt like his own taste being imposed. He got drunk on his own power.

Definitely.

James Ferman was a contradiction. Ferman ended up getting involved with legalising pornography for home-viewing. It was his liberal stance on it – that sex without violence was fine – that ended up with him getting sacked from the job. So there's this huge chapter about the demise of James for being liberal. Which is ironic. We have got some great archival interviews in the documentary, in which James goes in-depth into his views. You can see that he is conflicted. Every time there was a scare, like the Michael Ryan massacre at Hungerford, he had to be seen to be doing something about it. I think he was under pressure from politicians, too. Ultimately, I think he went too far.

So it was important for you to be fair-minded about Ferman?

Exactly. We didn't want to vilify him. He's dead and the dead can't speak for themselves. We wanted to look at the things he did and why he'd done them. He's a complex figure.

I've felt for a long time that the Video Recordings Act 1984 was the best thing that ever happened to the BBFC. Suddenly there was money coming in on a scale they'd never had before.

Yes. We cover the fact that the BBFC



expanded very quickly. They were legally responsible for categorising every film and video. It was a huge undertaking and there was a massive backlog. They became a business and there's definitely the feeling there was a tendency towards a class-based agenda. Ferman himself seemed to have a dim view of the common man. The BBFC became a big concern and a legislative body. It could make up rules as it went along.

What's your own personal take on censorship and does it align with the documentary?

My view, my personal view, which is not what the documentary is about, is that guidance and classification along age lines is fine. I don't agree with censorship. If you have an adult category, then, I think it should be uncensored. Anything over '18' should be uncensored, in my view. As long as you're not breaking the laws of the land, and by that I mean animal cruelty, physical harm, as long as nobody is breaking the law, I don't think why a five-second gore scene should be cut for an adult audience. Or anything transgressive. If you have a director that pushes the envelope, like David Cronenberg, even if it's an exploitation movie, I don't think these things should be cut. These images are not going to turn us into maniacs. It comes down to a question of taste. The BBFC and politicians use this tactic: 'This stuff is coming into your home... the idea that children can see it. If movies have to be cut to be allowed into the home... alcohol shouldn't be allowed, or knives. Those are physically more dangerous than films. If you treat people like kids and don't let them have things, it produces an effect where it goes underground.

There was a culture that developed around bootlegged films and VHS tapes, etc... You had all this activity. People tried to get hold of these tapes and they were criminalised. They were arrested and people had to hide their tapes. We're not talking about criminals. The press were saying

that there were snuff movie rings. No, it was teenagers watching horror films. It's kind of ridiculous. People were fined and imprisoned. That's where it went wrong.

It seems crazy that you could go to prison for owning a horror movie.

Exactly. We've got footage of police raids. There would be dawn raids, ten or twelve police officers, banging down a door and they'd be going into a teenager's living room, arresting them, seizing their tapes. It's like some nightmarish totalitarian state. Busting you for owning horror movies. It's when you look at it like that you think, 'hang on a minute, why are they criminalising what are basically normal people?' If you wanted to see an uncut Dario Argento movie, you were breaking the law? It's absurd.

It totally is.

This idea that films are evil. The powers that be were always talking about films as snuff movies. Snuff movie became another word for 'video nasty'. The press branding everybody as weirdos. It's a warning from history about how bad things were.

I remember when *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* was finally allowed a home release, in 2000. I was so excited. I watched it and thought, 'Why was this banned?'

This is why the underground horror scene became so strong. It's also why we were very anti-BBFC and anti-censorship, when we were growing up. We were told these films were going to destroy our minds. You watched it and thought: 'you are fucking joking?' This film, that I've been led to believe is the most depraved and weirdest thing of all time, wasn't. *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, in particular, is a really brilliant film. When stuff like that gets banned you think, 'How can this stuff be withheld?' It doesn't make any sense.

It wasn't just horror movies, martial arts thrillers were trimmed or banned too...

We talk about it in the documentary. The BBFC have got their own categories and rules. There is one they call 'imitable techniques'. If they fear the public will be able to imitate [martial arts movies], they say that's a dangerous thing. Martial arts weapons have fallen into that category. Martial arts movies became popular and it's almost as if they [the BBFC] didn't like that.

Are you tempted to leave it for a few years and do another edition of *Video Nasties*?

Everybody asks us this. To be perfectly honest, I don't think so. As far as I can see the story we wanted to tell was from that period. We had censorship issues in this country and lots of strange decisions being made. Then you have the Michael Ryan massacre, with the *Rambo* movies being blamed, and then you had the Bulger murder, where *Child's Play 3* was being blamed. So you had this second wave of fear. Films being branded as 'video nasties' were now mainstream Hollywood films. These weird underground films being picked on in the 1980s, all of a sudden it changed [to mainstream films], and it became very scary. I don't think there's much of a story

beyond that. We've had a few blips in recent years, like *The Human Centipede II* [Full Sequence], but it doesn't really compare to what happened in the 1980s and 1990s. Unless something radical happens, I just don't think there's much of a story.

Times have changed.

We still have to be careful when they change the rules and fight, but I don't think we're in a situation like we were before.

What do you think the future holds for the BBFC? We live in the age of the internet, region-free DVDs and downloading...

The thing is, it's very strange, because you'd think they would be finished. But it's weird that they're not. We have a funny idea in this country, of thinking we need to be told what to do. Because the BBFC are protected under law, they're not going anywhere. They have the power and are designated by government. We're stuck with them as censors. We're not even sure if our documentary will be passed, at the moment.

Is that because you want to use clips from movies that might still, to this day, be viewed as contentious?

That's right. All of these films, that have been basically banned or prosecuted, they've all got flags at the BBFC. So if you want to go into that material, they look at it quite carefully. In some cases, the films have been prosecuted. Anything that's been prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act [1959], it's ready to be flagged. At heart, we're looking at – and being critical about – censorship. It's a sensitive area.

VIDEO NASTIES: THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE 2 will be released July 14th on limited edition DVD.



WELCOME TO THE HORROR SHOW

An almost lifelong lover of horror films, David Hughes founded horror fanzine *Skeleton Crew* as a media studies project. He passed, but when the fanzine turned professional in 1990, and Hughes became editor – soliciting contributions from Stephen King, Clive Barker, Neil Gaiman, Shaun Hutson and many others – it went to his head; he got fired for writing an editorial about censorship. Unbowed and unbroken (and now unwaged), Hughes launched a new career as a movie marketer, thanks to horror author Christopher Fowler and his company, The Creative Partnership. Nearly 25 years and one huge horror revival later, Hughes decided to find something else to satisfy his blood lust: the dedicated VOD platform, TheHorrorShow.TV. Described by VODzilla.co as “the iTunes of horror”, TheHorrorShow.TV is now one of the fastest-growing VOD destinations in the UK, carrying almost 200 films (to stream and/or download) from cult classics by the likes of Lucio Fulci, Dario Argento and Mario Bava, to new releases and the odd UK exclusive (some of them very odd), with more being added regularly. We caught up with Hughes to find out more, and to see what’s in store for the future...

STARBURST: To begin with, what inspired you to launch TheHorrorShow.TV?
David Hughes: Two things inspired me to start it; one: I suddenly wondered “what happened to all the good horror films I’ve seen at FrightFest, Sitges etc. over the years, but have never seen the light of a UK projector? And two: Netflix and iTunes didn’t seem to be much interested in horror – iTunes had the triple-A titles, and Netflix will pick up some horror here and there, but neither really caters to the more dedicated horror fan. I hoped that we’d fill a void left by the other Video on Demand platforms.

That’s brilliant, as there’s lots of great undiscovered films. How did you set about compiling the initial ‘hit list’ of films? Were there any particular titles you felt you should get?

We sold ourselves as “created for horror fans, curated by horror fans”, so the main criteria was to pick a wide variety of films from cult favourites, such as most of Arrow’s catalogue of Fulci, Argento, Bava etc., to more extreme films – The Human Centipede for example – new releases,

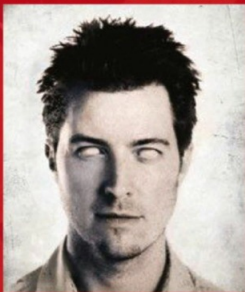
Birth of the Living Dead, The Pit, Mr Jones, etc. and, perhaps most importantly, exclusives, i.e. films not available elsewhere like *Separation and Daylight*.

We think it’s great those unreleased films are getting exposure. Several are unrated, do you envisage a problem with that at some point with the BBFC?

We’ve worked in partnership with the BBFC from the beginning, although we do have one or two unrated films on the site, most of our films are BBFC certified. We do, however, pride ourselves on having the highest quality and fully uncut versions of the films we carry, although films like *A Serbian Film* will be based on UK versions. The unrated films we carry do not contain content that would concern the BBFC.

Mentioning A Serbian Film there, would you say that was the most extreme film on the site at the moment or are there others which our readers may have not discovered?
A Serbian Film, Pieces, The Human Centipede films and UK exclusive *Outtake Reel*, the Lucio Fulci films... these would be the most extreme films of one kind or

WORDS - MARTIN UNSWORTH



another – but I think it’s important that we cater to all tastes, including those who prefer supernatural/psychological horror to ‘shock and gore’, so there’s a good mix.

Absolutely, on that subject do you envisage delving deeper into horror history and adding some pre-’60s films perhaps?

We’d love to carry as broad a range of films as possible, however at the moment we are somewhat at the mercy of the individual distributor deals we are doing, and those tend to be with a view to building as large and diverse a catalogue as possible. But we are also on the lookout for hard-to-find films and more UK exclusives, so that when we make the move to a subscription model, which will run parallel with the current pay-as-you-go offering, we will have a truly diverse and rich selection.

So a Netflix/Amazon Prime style package is planned for the future? That sounds great. Are there any plans to expand the viewing options, e.g. a TV or tablet app?
Yes, we’ll be offering a subscription service for a very competitive £4.99 per month, hopefully by the end of the year. It does

mean re-negotiating all of our distribution deals, but we're ironing out the details quickly. We are indeed working on smart TV/Xbox/PlayStation apps, however our films can be viewed on virtually anything with a web connection, from mobile phones - ideal for our Short Stack short film collection - to iOS and Android tablets, through PCs, Macs, laptops and smart TVs.

That sounds really promising. Are you considering another volume of Short Stack? That was particularly brilliant, and an excellent way to catch some of the shorts people who can't get to festivals may have missed.

We'd love to compile another Short Stack, and are definitely on the lookout for high quality short horror films - with 100% of the proceeds going back to the filmmakers. We're about half way to the next set of 10!

Really pleased to hear that! What are your views on the current state of the horror genre? Do you think it's relying too much on the found footage and zombie tropes or can you see it shifting away from that?

Well, we carry a fair few 'found footage' and zombie films, and just when you think each subgenre is exhausted, they throw up a new gem, such as Willow Creek, Daylight or The Sacrament, the latter being not strictly 'found footage', but with much in common. Sure, there's an over-reliance on those relatively easy-to-shoot styles, but hopefully the glut of product on the market will force new filmmakers to come up with new and better ideas, and begin to move away from their over-reliance on these kinds of films. I do think 2014 will be a disappointing year for cinema-released horror films, but there are some fantastic films creeping out on home entertainment formats, including, and in some cases exclusively to, Video on Demand, which I think is going to make it if not exactly a vintage year, then certainly a very strong one.

We totally agree, particularly great films like Birth of the Living Dead, which otherwise would have struggled to find a distributor. VOD certainly seems to be the future, even if dinosaurs like ourselves still prefer physical media. But with the Net still a hot bed of piracy, what are your thoughts/fears over that? VOD/streaming seems to have taken off with people, who are getting used to iTunes, etc. Do you think it's just a case of educating people into getting used to paying for products again?

Our view is that pirates will pirate, but hopefully people will see the value in paying between 99p and £3.49 to stream a great horror film in high quality with no ads, etc. on a sophisticated platform like TheHorrorShow.TV - and also that paying, say, £6.99-£9.99 for a high quality digital copy of a film is a great way to build a horror collection without building shelves! We're all still fans of physical copies of films, but we don't always want to wait for the physical release - sometimes we just want to see a film as soon as humanly, and hopefully legally, possible. And VOD is a fantastic way to join the conversation as early as possible; to see the films we'd normally have to wait months or even years to see through conventional distribution methods.

Finally, is there anything else you'd like to let our readers know about?

Among the new developments we're excited about is our new blog www.TheHorrorShow.TV/blog for which former FEARnet critic Scott Weinberg is now writing reviews of all the latest releases. We're also doing a weekly "VODcast" which is a great way to have various horror personalities pick their favourite films from the site, or take a look at new releases. And with nearly 200 films on the site, a little guidance can be quite helpful. And we'd like to offer STARBURST readers an exclusive offer: if they rent/stream any film by July 31st, you'll receive a promo code to get another rental free of charge.

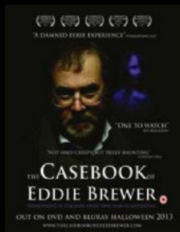


You can find out more, browse the films available, and sign up to rent or stream at TheHorrorShow.TV

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THE PIT
AKA JUG FACE (2013)

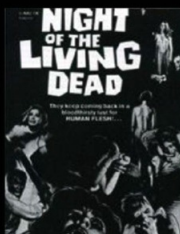


MR. JONES (2013)

THE BEYOND (1981)

BIRTH OF THE LIVING DEAD (2014)

THE CASEBOOK OF EDDIE BREWER (2012)



NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD (1968)

THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE (FIRST SEQUENCE) (2009)



EXCISION (2012)

OUTPOST 11 (2012)

THE MACHINE (2014)

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BIG SCREEN
GENRE RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED



MALEFICENT

CERT: 12A / DIRECTOR: ROBERT STROMBERG / SCREENPLAY: LINDA WOOLVERTON / STARRING: ANGELINA JOLIE, SHARLOT COPLEY, ELLE FANNING, SAM RILEY, IEMDA STAUNTON, LESLEY MANVILLE, JUNO TEMPLE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Sometimes we all need a bit of magic in our lives; there must be more to movies than spandex superheroes, giant space aliens, scaly monsters and big stomping robots. Maleficent is a welcome antidote to Hollywood's torrential tide of more-of-the-same summer blockbusters and, despite its orgy of CGI and largely forgettable 3D (2D screenings are available), it's a refreshing throwback to the classic Disney era of wicked witches, terrible spells, beautiful enchanted princesses and slapstick fairies. Oh, and it's got Angelina Jolie...

Angelina is quite simply magnificent as Maleficent; it's impossible to imagine anybody else imbuing the character - the Mistress of All Evil from the classic Sleeping Beauty fairytale - with the heady mixture of twisted venom and genuine pathos Jolie manages to conjure up. Her look is very much inspired by Disney's own 1959 Sleeping Beauty animated feature - her cheekbones are so sharp they could cut steak - but her Maleficent is much more three-dimensional and the whole point of the movie is to explain what turned her to the Dark Side in the first place

and to offer the hope of redemption for even the blackest heart. Betrayed in love as a delicate fairy hopping and skipping about the moors which are her home, Maleficent vows to use her magical powers against the humans who preside over the Kingdom from their glittering castle. When her first (and only) love Stefan (Copley) becomes King, she vows revenge by bestowing a terrible curse upon his first-born, the baby Aurora. To avoid the curse - Aurora will be plunged into an eternity of sleep when she pricks her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel on her sixteenth birthday, a sleep from which she can only be roused by "true love's kiss" - Stefan sends the child off into the custody of three ditz pixies (Staunton, Manville, Temple) until her sixteenth birthday and beyond. But when Maleficent happens across the curious child on the moors as she starts to grow up, her frostiness turns into something entirely different - but the irreversible curse is still looming...

Maleficent is absolutely charming. Linda Woolverton's script adds meat to the bones of its lead character and yet stays true to the Sleeping Beauty story

itself (albeit with one or two fresh twists unlikely to infuriate purists) and the film crackles with lively performances. Jolie dominates but Copley is good growly value as the surly King, Staunton and co provide decent comic relief as the pixies (although they look a bit eerie in miniature) and Brenton Thwaites is suitably wide-eyed as Phillip the prince who might (or might not) be Aurora's true love. Only Elle Fanning draws the short straw in the largely-thankless role of perpetually-cheery Aurora.

Despite its occasional hints of darkness - tiny children might find the tree-monster battle and fire-breathing dragon a bit too intense - Maleficent, which gets in and gets the job done in just over ninety minutes, is a genuine feel-good family-friendly treat, a little bit of magic in an often-mechanical and by-the-numbers modern world of movie-making. A Jolie good effort, you might say...

PAUL MOUNT

EXPECTED ++++++ 6

ACTUAL ++++++ 8



EDGE OF TOMORROW

CERT. 12A / DIRECTOR: DOUG LIMAN / SCREENPLAY: CHRISTOPHER MCQUARRIE, JEZ BUTTERWORTH, JOHN-HENRY BUTTERWORTH / STARRING: TOM CRUISE, EMILY BLUNT, BRENDAN GLEESON, BILL PAXTON, TONY WAY / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Despite the storytelling and editing possibilities inherent in the concept of "Groundhog Day meets Independence Day", Doug Lima's *Edge of Tomorrow* starts traditionally enough with news footage of the arrival of the alien Mimics on Earth and humanity's response, featuring Cruise's photogenic Major Cage drumming up support for Brendan Gleeson's United Defence Force.

After a disagreement over keeping his neck safely away from the front line, Cage is summarily demoted and dispatched to the front lines as part of a D-Day style landing in Mimic-occupied France, a battle he is woefully unprepared and untrained for, not even knowing how to disable the safety on his high tech "jacket" power suit/ weapons platform – a battle that results in both humanity's defeat and his death. And then... he wakes up. Cage starts the day again. Then he dies again. Then he "resets" yet again. Thanks to an encounter with a particular type of Mimic, Cage has discovered the secret to their overwhelming victories: a form of time travel.

Like Bill Murray's character in *Groundhog Day*, Cage makes some attempts at improving his lot and himself, trying to soften his initial awkward introduction to his squad-mates and later struggling to save some of them in battle, but it's only with the introduction of Emily

Blunt's Rita, the "Angel of Verdun", who shared a similar experience to Cage, that he finds a purpose to go with his power, and his mission begins. All he has to do is ensure that he dies when he needs to reset; getting injured is not enough and could strip him of this gift.

While there's no Sonny and Cher announcing the start of each "reset", Liman sensibly uses some of the tricks of *Groundhog Day*, adding in humorous and unexpected deaths for Cage. He also hides some iterations from the audience, introducing new scenes and situations only to reveal that Cage has experienced them multiple times already.

Despite a simple mission introduced in the second act, the film manages to keep things fresh, moving Cage's replays from the battle on the beach, to his training, to a MacGuffin hunt later in the film, and even then the film manages to come up with some surprises. Any perceived lack of jeopardy due to Cage's ability to retry things over and over again is tempered by Cruise's performance as well as the diminishing of that power for the film's climax, adding some much-needed suspense. This is however undermined when a slightly predictable ending arrives, even if it is handled with good humour.

For those hoping for a bit more science

fiction in their summer blockbusters, this is more of a war movie with sci-fi trappings. The enemy, the power suits and the time travel element all fit the mould nicely, but the sci-fi doesn't really have too much to say apart from "be better". The design of the alien Mimics is interesting enough, whirling dervishes of metal tentacles, spinning around a perpetually agape maw, and the power suits look pretty cool but aren't really that central to the plot. They're mostly just used as mobile weapon platforms and once the third act rolls around the cast seem to use every opportunity to step out of them.

Performances are solid all round, Cruise going from confused to badass as required; Blunt is mostly an unapproachable single-minded warrior, sometimes comically so, only softening towards the end. Bill Paxton also stands out as a continually irate Sergeant Major.

Edge of Tomorrow is a diverting enough, enjoyable, Tom Cruise war movie, but perhaps one that won't linger in the mind too long after the final credits have rolled.

IAIN MCNALLY

EXPECTED ++++++++ 9

ACTUAL ++++++++ 7



X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST

CERT: 12A / DIRECTOR: BRYAN SINGER / SCREENPLAY: SIMON KINBERG / STARRING: HUGH JACKMAN, JAMES MCAVOY, MICHAEL FASSBENDER, JENNIFER LAWRENCE, HALLE BERRY, NICHOLAS HOULT, ELLEN PAGE, PETER DINKLAGE, SHAWN ASHMORE, EVAN PETERS, JOSH HELMAN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Returning to the cinematic universe he helped to launch in 2000, before abandoning it in favour of the flashier tights of *Superman Returns*, Bryan Singer, like a cinematic Sam Beckett from *Quantum Leap*, has managed to put right that which once went wrong in Fox's franchise, after Brett Ratner's *X-Men: The Last Stand* left it in such tatters that Fox rebooted it so hard it ended up in the '60s!

As in the comic book series of the same name, Singer starts his tale in a dystopian future, one in which mutants are rounded up and killed by advanced "Sentinels", seemingly unstoppable techno-organic killing machines.

Thanks to a handy early warning system devised by Kitty Pryde (Ellen Page) whereby she shifts fellow mutant Bishop's conscious back in time a few days prior to any Sentinel attack, a band of mutants from the previous films, as well as some fresh blood, have managed to survive, but the war is all but lost. Seeing potential in her newfound ability, Professor X and Magneto opt to send a mutant's mind back to a key point in the past, to prevent the creation of the Sentinels. Thanks to Hugh Jackman's box office draw, Wolverine is selected to go back, (along with the fact that he is the only one who could survive the trip thanks to his healing factor). Once he goes back, both the changed past of 1973 and the nightmare "future past" will proceed together in lockstep to twin climaxes, until he returns and whatever changes he was able to effect, if any, take hold. Wolverine must now find Professor X and Magneto, stop the "unfortunate event", save the world and do all this

before the Sentinels find the mutants in the future and without losing his cool or he'll slip back... to the future!

With *Days of Future Past*, Singer seems to have pulled off the first on-screen "retcon" of a cinematic comic franchise (as opposed to the off-screen reboots we're all accustomed to), ignoring much that was lamented in Ratner's film, while setting the franchise back on its "correct" path. He retains many of the hallmarks of his first 2 films, down to the lingering "X" in the 20th Century Fox logo at the start of the film, while taking full advantage of the weight of the First Class cast. While mutants

abound, this is truly the story of Charles (Professor X), Erik (Magneto), and Raven (Mystique), the state of their relationships from the first film, how time has battered them and where they can allow themselves to go next.

This approach leaves some casualties in its wake, as some of the less famous cast members from First Class are disposed of off-screen with terminal consequences. It is heartening however, to see old favourites such as Storm, Iceman, Kitty Pryde and Colossus return, even if some are merely reduced to Sentinel fodder. The newer mutants, including the long-awaited appearance of Bishop, are also used to fill out the numbers but little else. That the film can still be praised in spite of this, speaks to the quality of the central cast and the action and surprises throughout.

Singer doesn't ignore X3 completely, using Logan's relationship with Jean Grey in a similar fashion to last year's *The Wolverine*, but those hoping for answers to how Xavier returned from the dead or Magneto got his powers back will be left wanting. The jump to the 1970s is handled well, with the main characters in some surprising situations, and Nixon, Vietnam and JFK's assassination at the end of the '60s factor into the story too.

The action and effects are handled expertly and as with previous X-Men films and comics, there is speechifying, unlikely alliances, sudden betrayals and the dénouement will have fans of the original movies swooning. With this and *The Wolverine*, Fox may have finally gotten to grips with its corner of the Marvel cinematic universe, an impression that is cemented further once the post-credits stinger for the next film in the franchise is revealed!

IAN MCNALLY

EXPECTED +++++++ 7

ACTUAL +++++++ 8





GODZILLA

CERT: 12A / DIRECTOR: GARETH EDWARDS / SCREENPLAY: MAX BORENSTEIN / STARRING: AARON TAYLOR-JOHNSON, ELIZABETH OLSEN, BRYAN CRANSTON, KEN WATANABE, SALLY HAWKINS, JULIETTE BINOCHE, DAVID STRATHAIRN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

After making his well-received 2010 debut *Monsters* guerrilla-style, with a tiny crew and budget, a mostly improvised script, using real locations and whoever happened to be standing around as extras and doing all of the special effects work himself on his bedroom computer, director Gareth Edwards was handed the keys to the kingdom by Warner Bros, Legendary and Toho (home of the original *Godzilla*) and has he ever delivered!

Godzilla pulls off the enviable trick of reintroducing and reinventing the classic king of the monsters while essentially keeping him the same. The look and sound of *Godzilla*, his ties to nuclear weapons and habit of

defending humanity (sometimes), are all present and correct but subtly shifted in unexpected but not unpleasant ways. For the first reel or two, however, he hardly shows up in his own movie, as the film focuses instead on the Brody family; father Joe (Cranston) tries to discover what really happened at his Japanese nuclear power plant in 1999, after a government cover-up hides the truth behind a horrible accident, dragging his navy explosives expert son, Ford (Taylor-Johnson), and his family into trouble with him, before *Godzilla* fully rises and all hell breaks loose.

It's understandable that Ford needs to be in the military so that he has a

reason to be in many of the action scenes, enabling the film to have some human interest to counterpoint the giant monster(s?) on screen, but it can at times make it feel as if he's the unluckiest person alive. Other characters do wander in and out of the plot but the action is all kept decidedly grounded with no scenes of the president or UN debating the crisis, just soldiers and scientists.

Some might find the human angle a little wearying, as Edwards stages a few fake-outs where the movie cuts from the action to instead follow the human leads. However, fans will probably savour the tension building for the inevitable climax, and Edwards does deliver striking visuals, action, and humour throughout. Needless to say, the effects look great and the film is littered with enjoyable surprises and homages to *Godzilla*'s past, none more so than the rousing finale of the film.

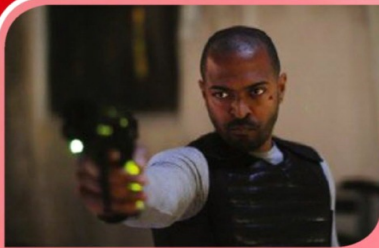
If you can get on board with the statement by Ken Watanabe's almost perpetually shocked and staring Dr Serizawa, that "Nature has an order, there's a power to restore balance, he is that balance" then you should be able to enjoy the film for what it is; a clever reinvention of Big G for the modern age that lovingly keeps the elements that made him popular in the first place.

IAIN MCNALLY



EXPECTED ++++++++ 6

ACTUAL ++++++++ 8



THE ANOMALY

CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: NOEL CLARKE / SCREENPLAY: SIMON LEWIS / STARRING: NOEL CLARKE, IAN SOMERHALDER, LUKE HEMSWORTH, BRIAN COX / RELEASED: JULY 4TH

The Anomaly opens with Ryan (Clarke) in the back of a van with a young child. It emerges that the child's mother was killed by some men in red masks and that he was taken captive after that. Ryan breaks out of the van with the child as they look to make their escape. Ian Somerhalder's Harkin gives chase to the duo. Ryan, with no memory of how he got into this situation, is soon

revealed to be holding one of the aforementioned red masks. And with that, The Anomaly's one trick is revealed. Clarke's character only has a limited amount of consciousness before he essentially disappears and wakes up elsewhere, all the while trying to work out what exactly is going on.

As Ryan wades his way through Russian mobsters, terrorism operatives, scientists,

and hookers, he is trying to figure out just why this is happening to him and what the endgame of all of this is. Thanks to a convoluted mishmash of a plot, The Anomaly starts with promise but then becomes massively repetitive very quickly. Within the first 20 minutes or so, the film just seems to play the same scenes over and over but in different locations. Wake up, realise what's happening, brawl, lose consciousness, lather, rinse, repeat. That's pretty much the film in a nutshell.

Initially, The Anomaly has a little bit of a Quantum Leap charm to its "awakening in strange places", and there's even a sense of Fight Club meets The Matrix in the movie's first few fastfights. But, as mentioned, it just becomes as repetitive as a Saturday night kebab after a few too many Newcastle Brown Ales. Every fight scene, and there are plenty, features a ridiculous overuse of slow motion techniques. It's as if Clarke and his crew have just seen The Matrix and the whole bullet-time thing and realised how good it looks. Thing is, this isn't 1999 and a whole host

have been there, imitated that, then moved on.

As for the performances, Brian Cox is criminally underutilised as the man behind all of Ryan's issues, Somerhalder's eyes sparkle but his performance stumbles through the same sort of wooden territory that is usually reserved for Keanu Reeves, Clarke does well when he gets the chance to do more than just punch and wince, and the supporting performances range from annoying (Luke Hemsworth's cocksure terrorism agent) to sultry (Alexis Knapp's hooker-with-a-heart) to migraine-inducing bad accents (Michael Bisping's Russian mobster).

It's a shame that The Anomaly falls so flat so quickly. The film has a decent opening, some well-choreographed brawls, and a relatively unique premise. Sadly, it suffers from trying to be too clever and from a plot that quickly becomes tiresome.

ANDREW POLLARD

EXPECTED ++++++ 6

ACTUAL ++++++ 4



OCULUS

CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: MIKE FLANAGAN / SCREENPLAY: JEFF HOWARD, MIKE FLANAGAN / STARRING: KAREN GILLAN, BRENTON THWAITES, KATEE SACKHOFF / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

A grim, gory and unsettling suburban horror which reaches into the depths of human fear to reveal only darkness, director Mike Flanagan's new film traverses similar ground to his previous feature Absentia, looking to past trauma and familial relationships for inspiration once again with a disturbing tale revolving around a grand and ominous Bavarian black cedar mirror.

Though the crux of what

Oculus is dealing with is genuinely upsetting – abuse, infidelity and mental illness – Flanagan remembers to have a sense of humour towards the start of the film before it gets into truly distressing territory. He presents a brother and sister wildly at odds with each other when it comes to their family history, who prod and poke at one another like a highly strung Mulder and Scully. Karen Gillan delivers exposition at

an exponentially fast rate as Kaylie, the Mulder type with strong beliefs. Tim (Thwaites) blames the deterioration of family circumstances on his father doing awful things whilst Kaylie believes supernatural phenomena are to blame. A cursed mirror that Kaylie has tracked through time to prove her theory provides the menacing centre to which they gravitate, as they undertake an experiment eleven years after tragedy pulled them apart at their family home, with Flanagan switching between time frames, looking to both the past and the present of the siblings for clues.

The Shining is a big influence here, with a father locked up in his office working, and the confined location of the family home being where most of the terrorising takes place. Flanagan uses grotesque visuals sparsely, relying on the relationship between siblings Kaylie and Tim to be the arena for the horrifying events that play out. Given that both are inclined to a distorted view of reality, you're never quite sure of what's real or what's not, but either way you choose to

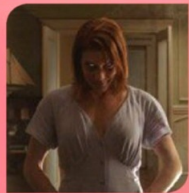
interpret it, it's grisly.

Disorientating fever pitch is reached by the end as the two timelines intertwine thanks to neat editing and crisp sound effects (the crunch of glass in one scene being particularly effective). With solid performances – especially from Katee Sackhoff and newcomer Annalise Basso – and compelling subject matter, Oculus is a suspenseful, tight and wonderfully executed horror which proves Flanagan's flair for the genre and marks him as exciting talent to watch.

KATHERINE MCLAUGHLIN

EXPECTED ++++++ 6

ACTUAL ++++++ 7





A MILLION WAYS TO DIE IN THE WEST
 CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: SETH MACFARLANE / SCREENPLAY: SETH MACFARLANE, ALEC SULKIN, WELLESLEY WILD / STARRING: SETH MACFARLANE, CHARLIZE THERON, AMANDA SEYFRIED, NEIL PATRICK HARRIS, GIOVANNI RIBISI, SARAH SILVERMAN, LIAM NEESON / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

In all honesty, when Family Guy creator Seth MacFarlane's successful directorial debut *Ted* was heavily used in the promotion of this one, the alarm bells started ringing. If you are expecting a film as funny as that, please expel such a thought from your head, unless you enjoy crushing disappointment. *A Million Ways to Die in the West* is MacFarlane's *The Hangover* Part II, in that it's a film that follows up a hit with a low-on-laughs misfire. The plot sees sheep farmer Albert (MacFarlane) struggling to cope with life in the dangerous Wild West. When his girlfriend Louise (Seyfried)

dumps him, that's the last straw – until he meets a rootin'-tootin' soulmate in Anna (Theron). But it just so happens that she is the wife of one of the west's most dangerous gunslingers, Clinch Leatherwood (Neeson).

There's a distinct whiff of *Blazing Saddles* here (Joel McNeely's opening credits in particular sing from the same hymn sheet), but sadly it feels as if the writers watched *Mel Brooks'* movie in fast-forward. The look of the film (sets, costumes, props) is spot on and there are smatterings of potential throughout, but the lazy scripting drags the whole

thing down. The wit, panache and fizz of the best genre comedy is absent and despite some promising moments of self-referentiality (in too short supply), the film (much like David Gordon Green's fantasy comedy *Your Highness*) mistakes sex, profanity and filth for flawless writing. There is nothing wrong with crude comedy but this offers little but titters at best.

However, the biggest crime is not even the film's flat laugh rate. The cast is strewn with stars but *A Million Ways to Die in the West* finds a million ways to misuse them. MacFarlane is a fantastic voice actor but his onscreen persona needs serious work and thus casting him as the lead was a bad move. Albert is hapless and pathetic but never especially likeable as a central character. Amanda Seyfried is here merely for a joke to be made about the size of her eyes, Liam Neeson fits the genre as well as you'd expect but he is underused as the main antagonist, and Neil Patrick Harris as Foy (Louise's new moustachioed boyfriend) only really shifts in a hat. It's lucky then that we have Theron to liven up proceedings. In one

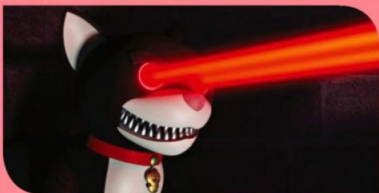
of her first comedy roles, she is excellent and in truth a bit too good for this film. In many ways the dedication of this cast rescue this film from being a total embarrassment, as do an impressive list of cameos – admittedly most are pointless, but one appearance from a time-jumping franchise regular is undoubtedly excellent and perhaps the movie's best moment!

A Million Ways to Die in the West isn't the worst film of the year, but it's a ham-fisted, lazy and unfunny effort. Even for fans of MacFarlane, this is a feeble and rather lazy effort that feels like a stage show that Max Bielsky and Leo Bloom from *The Producers* would have made – in fact, one drug hallucination sequence in the film may as well be known as 'spring time for Albert'. Wait for *Ted 2* or the next series of Family Guy instead, because this is obviously just a time waster until then. Call it an opportunity waste-Ted.

JACK BOTTOMLEY

EXPECTED ++++++ 6

ACTUAL ++++++ 4



POSTMAN PAT: THE MOVIE
 CERT: U / DIRECTOR: MIKE DISA / SCREENPLAY: KIM FULLER, NICOLE DUBUC, ANNIKA BLUMH / STARRING: STEPHEN MANGAN, RONAN KEATING, JIM BROADBENT, DAVID TENNANT, RUPERT GRINT / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

In a year where *Paddington Bear* (or *Paddington* as it is being called) is already being released, it seems producers just can't stop trying to bring classic TV characters to the big screen. In essence, this is the problem with this adaptation of the long-running British children's series, which pales in comparison to the likes of this year's *Mr. Peabody & Sherman*. The fact that this film ditches the revered stop-motion animation of the series for CGI, or includes a whole new voice cast is not the biggest issue here. The fact is that the series,

built upon old school decency and British charm, is completely at odds with this strange and overblown plot. *Postman Pat: The Movie* will please some (very) youngsters with its inoffensive story but adults who grew up with Pat will likely want to scrape their eyes out with a letter opener when the Britain's Got Talent-esque plot takes over.

The film sees Pat Clifton – the friendly, veteran postman of the village of Greendale – enter auditions for a talent show called *You're the One*. In his absence, the robotic Patbot 3000s are

left to deliver the mail. Needless to say things do not go well, so Pat and his black and white cat Jess must ultimately try and save the day. This strange decision to combine robots and *The X Factor* with *Postman Pat* is made even stranger by the fact that there aren't really many gags as a result. The film is another case of filmmakers feeling that a decent little story is not good enough; they have to pump it full of pop culture and in this case it just doesn't come off well. Ronan Keating provides Pat's singing voice in a sequence that shows that at some point in the film's making there was some affection for the material, but that is lost under the Simon Cowbell (yes, we're going there) judged competition and an equally naff sci-fi twist with menacing robots.

It all starts dangerously close to *Top Cat: The Movie 3D*. Luckily, it never quite descends to such levels of awful, but all the same, Pat's film outing fails to deliver the goods. There are some plus points in that Episodes star Stephen Mangan makes an endearing voice for Pat (even if he cannot realistically match Ken Barrie who voiced

Pat from 1981–2012, until Lewis 'Sebulba' Macleod took over in 2013). Additionally there are odd gags that work (Pat reading *The Postman Always Rings Twice*) and some harmless tomfoolery for the young ones. Heck, it wouldn't even have felt so bad if the animation wasn't so lacklustre but the CGI is littered with colour without any real sense of joy. It all looks a bit unfinished, just like the story.

Sadly, despite it not being among the worst spins on classic TV shows, *Postman Pat: The Movie* does not have enough to match its source material's enduring appeal. It will likely be forgotten, as we now look forward to probable future incarnations of *Thomas the Tank Engine* or *The Clangers* (which apparently is returning to TV soon). That said, at least we can be thankful that the result is not as garish as that poster that has Pat opening his arms and doing a rather dodgy-looking pose (*Postman Pat* Mustard anyone?).

JACK BOTTOMLEY

EXPECTED ++++++ 6

ACTUAL ++++++ 4

REVIEWS

THE LATEST HOME
VIDEO RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED



MAN OF TAI CHI

DVD + BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: KEANU REEVES / SCREENPLAY: MICHAEL G. COONEY /
STARRING: TIGER HU CHEN, KEANU REEVES, KAREN MOK / RELEASE DATE: JULY 7TH

Keanu Reeves successfully moves from one side of the camera to the other with a surprising choice for his directorial debut: an old school Hong Kong martial arts film. Reeves plays the antagonist, Mark Donaka, wealthy Hong Kong security company owner and operator of a shady underground fighting ring, who sets his sights on enticing innocent Tiger Chen, (played by the martial artist also known as Tiger Hu Chen, Reeves' martial arts teacher on the Matrix films), the titular Man of Tai Chi, into the ring.

Tiger Chen, a harried courier in Beijing, is the only heir to his particular brand of tai chi passed down through 600 generations, and he aspires to show that it can be much more of a combat-focused martial art than traditionally thought by taking part in legitimate competitions with other martial artists. However, Donaka's fights soon set him down a dark path of needless aggression and unbalanced chi.

Parallel to this story, Sun Jingshi (Mok), a Hong Kong police officer, tracks Donaka and eventually Tiger Chen, hoping to bring down the fighting ring, as she knows that (as shown in the first sequence of the film) no one ever leaves this ring alive. Can Tiger Chen redeem himself before he loses too much of himself and what else has Donaka got in

mind for him?

For a first-timer, Reeves directs all aspects of the film very well, taking the necessary time to set up the characters and stories before jumping into the fights, and the decision to keep almost half the dialogue in Chinese (25% Mandarin and 25% Cantonese if reports are correct) keeps the film firmly grounded in reality, apart from a minor fantastical element near the climax that warrants its inclusion in STARBURST.

It is a martial arts competition film

however, and much of the remaining running time is taken up with Tiger's bouts against opponents from all types of martial arts – the increasing difficulty, and number, of his opponents reflecting his own problems staying true to his sifu's teachings and his love of Tai Chi.

Reeves had to abandon plans to use a special rig to move the camera seamlessly around and above the actors while fighting. We can only imagine what visual delights this would have provided, but even so the fighting on display is solid and visceral, the camera staying close in to the combat but still allowing the fight progression and impressive moves to be fully appreciated. These scenes escalate in their brutality as the film progresses, starting with elegant use of tai chi to avoid and redirect blows and graduating to vicious no-holds-barred battles later in the film.

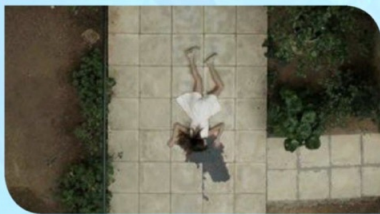
A few scenes using wirework break the tone of the fights due to the unrealistic lack of weight of some characters, but it appears that Reeves himself didn't appreciate this approach as the technique is quickly dismissed and doesn't seem to be used again. Acting-wise, Chen is likeable as the lead and Reeves provides a first-rate antagonist, even getting his hands dirty later in the film. *Man of Tai Chi* should appeal to all fans of Hong Kong (and international) action cinema and shows a promising start to what will hopefully be a long and interesting directing career for Reeves.

IAIN MCNALLY

+++++ 8



STARBURST



MISS VIOLENCE

DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: ALEXANDROS AVRANAS / SCREENPLAY: ALEXANDROS AVRANAS, KOSTAS PEROULIS / STARRING: KOSTAS ANTALPOPOULOS, CONSTANTINOS ATHANASIADES / RELEASE DATE: JULY 7TH

Angeliki (Chloe Bolota), on her 11th birthday, jumps out of an open window. She is smiling as she does so. The family appear sad and upset for five minutes and then carry on as if nothing untoward has happened. No questions are asked and no soul-searching undertaken. It's like the poor girl has been erased from memory. But why?

For a long time, and the film's pace is pitched at glacial, Avranas feeds the viewer crumbs of information about

the dynamics at work within the family unit. From the very first scene, even before the shocking act of Angeliki's suicide, there's something not quite right. Could it be the Leonard Cohen song, "Dance Me To The End of Love", playing on the stereo system or the bland colour scheme of the home interior and costume design?

Miss Violence is an experimental mixture of thriller narrative (removed of all genre thrills), horror movie and detective

story, complete with a series of revelations so astoundingly grim that the overall reaction, as the film draws to a close, is one of absolute devastation.

The head of the family, superbly played by Themis Panou, is a tyrant. He rules his small fiefdom like the most skilled politician. When not taking part-time employment as an accountant, he is busy overseeing every aspect of life at home. The film's subtext can be easily enough aligned to the modern state of Greece's troubled politics, but it casts its net even further afield to dissect the overall relationship between individual and state and the capitalist narcotic that is materialism. The family unit serves as a microcosm.

The father gives with

one hand and takes with the other. He inspires conformity through fear and rewards and manipulates with promises. He abuses the most sacred trust under the assumption that nobody will stand up against him. The final twenty minutes is a descent into the darkest hell with a denouement of soul-crushing proportions.

If you look beyond the film's ability to offend quite possibly every sensibility you hold dear, there's much to think about and take from it. Nevertheless, Miss Violence is a despairing picture and a tough viewing experience.

Extras: None

MARTYN CONTERIO

+++++ 7



IF... (1968)

BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: LINDSAY ANDERSON / SCREENPLAY: DAVID SHERWIN / STARRING: MALCOLM MCDOWELL, DAVID WOOD, RICHARD WARWICK, CHRISTINE NOONAN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

If... is a beautifully crafted, if not often shocking, British classic. Set in a traditional boys' boarding school, the story centres on Mick Travis (McDowell) and two of his pals as they look to rebel against the status quo of pompous, callous prefects and blasé teachers who regurgitate the same, sterile tie year after year. The charismatic Travis wishes to stage a revolution, and his impassioned uprising pushes things forward towards

a chilling, impactful climax.

Anderson's film, his first in a trilogy of Mick Travis-centred efforts, is full of stiff upper lips, razor-sharp side-partings, epic sideburns, and sticking it to the man. The film often plays in a surreal, trippy way, switching to black and white at a moment's notice, then flipping back to colour. We're shown a world that is regimented by cold showers and, as one of the film's dastardly prefects states, homosexual flirtatiousness.

Part social commentary, part black comedy, but all entertainment, If... can't help but grab your attention from the get-go. And from there on out, the film doesn't let you go until it's finished with you.

In terms of the performances, Malcolm McDowell is simply fantastic as Travis, the boy who is looking to break free from the chains of the old establishment, go against the grain, and who wants to expand his horizons. So the story goes, it was his turn here that landed McDowell the Alex gig in Stanley Kubrick's A Clockwork Orange, and it's easy to see why. Charming, elegant, intelligent but with clear unsavoury tendencies, McDowell's turn as Mick Travis has you rooting for him, even at the times when you likely shouldn't be. The actor is also helped out by some equally brilliant performances from the principal cast and, more importantly, the supporting cast, which is even more remarkable when so many of those involved were so young. All this does is add to the authenticity of the film and give it extra gravitas.

A surreal, spellbinding

tale, If... is a brave movie that is laced in commentary, risk, and passion. So revolutionary and impressive was the film on its 1968 release, it actually went on to win the 1969 Palme d'Or. Yes, it may have rubbed a lot of people up the wrong way upon its initial release, but maybe that's because there's a lot of heart and truth at the core of If..., holding it together and constantly shining through. It also has to be said that this release is additionally helped out by the now-customary boatload of extras that Eureka are putting out with their Masters of Cinema series, most interesting of which is the commentary from star McDowell and film historian David Robinson. When all is said and done, If... is simply a must-have for fans of British cinema.

Extras: Commentary with David Robinson and Malcolm McDowell / Three short films by Lindsay Anderson / Extensive interviews with cast and crew / Two trailers / 56-page booklet

ANDREW POLLARD

+++++ 9



GOAL OF THE DEAD

DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: THIERRY POIRAUD, BENJAMIN ROCHER
/ SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: ALBAN LENOIR, CHARLIE
BRUNEAU, AHMED SYLLA, TIPHAINE DAVIOT / RELEASE DATE: JULY 27TH

We'll be honest, the first mention of Goal of the Dead had us rolling our eyes and expecting the worst. As it happens, this turned out to be a charming movie that regularly hits the correct beats throughout. Yes, the basic premise is football and zombies, but don't let the bonkers notion put you off.

Goal of the Dead centres on glamorous, glitzy Olympique de Paris travelling to play lowly Caplongue in a cup match.

It turns out that, years prior, Caplongue's star player, Sam Lorit (Lenoir), had left his home town club for the bright lights of Paris. Once idolised, Lorit is villainised upon this homecoming. So much so, local player Jeannot (Sébastien Vandenbergh) is injected with a mysterious potion that sends him into a rage. The hulking Jeannot goes on a rampaging mission to make sure that former friend Lorit doesn't leave the stadium

alive. It just so happens that Jeannot's rage-fuelled condition is contagious, passed on whenever the infected vomit on somebody. As the virus spreads, the small town of Caplongue falls into darkness.

Despite its ludicrous-sounding plot, Goal of the Dead is a massively enjoyable movie. As well as ageing star Lorit, we get introduced to young, arrogant teammate Idriss (Sylla). Then there's a TV reporter (Bruneau) tasked with following the Paris team for this game, money-grabbing agents, fickle fans, well-meaning football managers, and even some football hooligans thrown in for good measure. Truly a movie of two halves, with each being directed by a separate director, the film works wonders as a football movie, looking at some of the things that are wrong with the modern game whilst the veteran Lorit is desperate to show that he still has value in a profession now driven by ego and money. Then there's the zombie element, which has a feel of 28 Days Later meets Resident Evil 2's Raccoon City, with a dash

of Shaun of the Dead's humour thrown in for good measure.

As a football film, the movie has some standout moments for that particular subgenre. As a zombie movie, it does more than enough to get by. At the core of Goal of the Dead, though, are some well-developed, interesting characters exuding humour, sincerity and appeal. The film is also stylish, with a slightly discoloured, apocalyptic vibe. All of the actors do a splendid job in their particular roles and Lenoir proves to be a very likeable lead, even if his character has some less-than-admirable traits.

Whilst the football elements are likely to be more interesting than the horror elements, Goal of the Dead balances balls and beasts as it delivers a perfectly executed finish into the top corner of the comedy-horror genre. Back of the net, son!

Extras: None

ANDREW POLLARD

+++++++ 8



MR. JONES

DVD + VOD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: KARL MUELLER /
STARRING: JON FOSTER, SARAH JONES, MARK STEGER / RELEASE
DATE: OUT NOW

'What if you came to the woods to find solitude but found out you were not really alone', that's the predicament facing Penny (Jones) and Scott (Foster) when they take a year out to live in the country. Penny halts her successful photography career, while Scott intends to film a nature documentary; but after a few weeks, this aspiration comes to nothing

as he stops taking his medication and, rather than helping their relationship, the seclusion puts more of a strain on it. They are woken one night by a flock of birds which die after hurtling themselves toward the cabin. Things get even more bizarre when they discover a shack in the middle of the wood, which they take it on themselves to look around.

In the basement, they find a collection of disturbing scarecrows. Penny realises that they are the work of a reclusive artist, Mr Jones (Steger) who sent similar works to seemingly random people all over the country. She suggests Scott should change the focus of his work to get the background on the man. Most of them speak academically about his work, but one alleged recipient warns Scott that he should stay away and stop his investigation. Staying back at the cabin, Penny attempts to photograph the totems, but is increasingly spooked when the hooded artist suddenly appears in front of her while setting his artwork up, Banksy-style. When Scott comes back, things get worse and they become under siege from both Mr Jones and their own imaginations and fears.

Filmed in a first person format, but far from 'found footage', the style ranges from shaky-cam to talking head interviews, to a standard film method. A subtle yet effective score supplements the chills, and there are many editing

techniques used, including rough jump cuts and some stylishly flashy images. Overall, they do enhance the effect rather than distract, but by the end, the feeling is somewhat of a sensory overload.

It's a dark film, in tone as well as image; so much of the action takes place in near-darkness so one has to really pay attention. Even then, it doesn't lay out all the answers, which could frustrate some viewers. As the line between reality and nightmare blurs, the film amps up both tension in the viewer and between the couple, before eventually eschewing the hand held self-shot look altogether. It's a brave effort at creating something different, and although it doesn't fully work, it's engaging enough to hold the interest for the running time and provides one or two jolts among some disturbing (but not graphic) imagery.

Extras: None

MARTIN UNSWORTH

+++++++ 8



NOSFERATU, THE VAMPIRE (1979)

BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: WERNER HERZOG / STARRING: KLAUS KINSKI, BRUNO GANZ, ISABELLE ADJANI, ROLAND TOPOR / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

As part of the upcoming Werner Herzog Collection, this 1979 classic finally gets a Blu-ray release. Herzog's legendary vampire movie is a remake of sorts of F.W. Murnau's 1922 *Nosferatu*, whilst also pulling other elements from Bram Stoker's original source. When Count Dracula (Kinski) shows interest in purchasing a property, Jonathan Harker (Ganz) is sent to the Count's Transylvanian lair to seal the deal. Of course, Dracula is

revealed to be a vampire, and the Count sets his eyes on the affections of Harker's 'one true', Lucy (Adjani).

Now we've all seen plenty of vampire movies over the years, so what makes this one so different? It's no exaggeration to say that *Nosferatu*, the Vampire, is a masterpiece. The film is awash with style, texture and atmosphere. Visually stunning, complete with a haunting score, and exquisitely shot, this retelling of an old classic stands head

and shoulders over nearly all of its peers. Central to all of the splendour of Herzog's film is Klaus Kinski.

As Count Dracula, Kinski portrays a very different Dracula to the one that general audiences are accustomed to. Forget the vibrant, charismatic, charming and sexual Dracula that seduces ladies left, right and centre as if he were some gothic Don Juan. This Dracula is ghastly, ghoulish and straight-out ugly in appearance, and his face is etched with pain and suffering. This is a Dracula who has been cursed with immortality. Pained but at one with the lonely monster that he is, this version of the character is delivered stunningly by Kinski. No doubt about it, Kinski is simply mesmerising as the Count. Similarly, Ganz and Adjani are fantastic in their roles, whilst the rest of the cast are all pitch-perfect.

Nosferatu, the Vampire is a slow-burning, delicate story that is masterfully presented by a director at his very best. Herzog's movie is breathtakingly beautiful in the way it has been crafted and put together. The director takes his time to

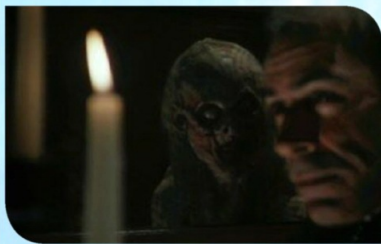
tell the tale of the tormented bloodsucker, and this effort is full of subtleties, both on the part of the director and of the actors involved. Not a single drop of blood is wasted here, and the film's elegantly tragic narrative features not one moment of wasted motion.

Featuring both the English and German versions of the movie in remastered forms, this steelbook is crammed with impressive extras, including an informative audio commentary from Werner Herzog and an interesting mini-documentary featuring Herzog and star Klaus Kinski. With this Blu-ray, one of the greatest vampire movies of all time gets a fitting release. Yes, he's often pretentious and treats animals/actors like shit, but when he gets it right, Werner Herzog is a true master of cinema.

Extras: Audio commentary with Werner Herzog / On-set documentary / Stills gallery / Trailer / 20-page booklet

ANDREW POLLARD

+++++++10



LURKING FEAR (1994)

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: C. COURTNEY JOYNER / STARRING: ASHLEY LAURENCE, JEFFREY COMBS, JON FINCH / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Preceding From Dusk till Dawn by two years, *Lurking Fear* (1994) performs a similar trick of starting out as a crime drama, then taking a sharp segue into the supernatural – only it does it on a budget and, you won't be surprised to hear, not nearly as well. For starters, it tips its hand with a prologue featuring a scary taloned claw trusting out of an air vent, so that's the big surprise ruined.

Nor does it have Tarantino's dialogue, George Clooney's starchy allure or Rodriguez's Tex-Mex-inflected visual flair (it tries, but it was shot on a shoestring in Bucharest). What it does have, though, is a pretty neat idea with some imaginative touches, plus Jeffrey Combs and that chick from the Hellraiser films.

The story concerns an ex-con looking to collect some

buried dosh left to him as a sort of legacy by his father, and in turn being pursued by a cockney mobster (Jon Finch sporting a dangly earring) and his cohorts. He gets to the hiding place, an old cemetery, only to find that a small group of diehards are encamped there attempting to ward off a mysterious subterranean threat... well, it's not that mysterious really, they're sitting on a nest of goggle-eyed, tunnel-dwelling goons who want to drain their blood to feed their babies!

Give this to someone like John Carpenter, and you'd have the basis for an enjoyably shocky B-movie. Unfortunately, it's in the hands of one C. Courtney Joyner, a screenwriter for most of his career, and it's a shame he didn't pass it on to a more experienced helmsman, because he fails to make the most of some promising material and well-written characters' parts. He has no luck getting decent performances from the less experienced cast members, and the action sequences and scare gags have a lumpy,

under-rehearsed quality. In the event, the whole thing trundles along slightly awkwardly before being hastily wrapped up after an hour and a bit.

Still, the creature makeup is decent, as is Ashley Laurence, who – looking very buff and gym-toned – dons a singlet and combat trousers to play a Sarah Connor-type action heroine who's good with guns and dynamite. Jeffrey Combs also puts in a lively turn as a drunken doctor tending wounds between sips from a pocket flask the size of a 1980s mobile phone. And it's nice to catch a rare sighting of Jon Finch, a '70s actor who seemed to vanish later in his career almost as if he actually had been dragged into a hole. You might find the poor production values and leaden direction totally off-putting, but if you can get over that *Lurking Fear* has more than a few lurking merits.

Extras: *The Making of Lurking Fear* / Trailers

JULIAN WHITE

+++++++5



ESCAPE FROM TOMORROW

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: RANDY MOORE / STARRING: ROY ABRAMSOHN, ELENA SCHUBER, KATELYNN RODRIGUEZ, JACK DALTON / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 30TH

There are certain films out there that, regardless of their quality, must be appreciated for even coming to be and Randy Moore's schizophrenic Disneyland horror *Escape From Tomorrow* is one of these. Legally risky and controversial, this is a movie that goes all-out in concept and while the delivery is polarising, it's

unlikely that its writer/director Randy Moore wanted it any other way. The movie is filmed guerrilla-style at Disneyland (without their blessing) and sees father/husband Jim (Roy Abramsohn) being slowly intoxicated by the setting and the weird events going on there. Shot in black and white and

showered in Disney iconography, it is hard to say what is worse, the fact this odd film is so inexplicably mesmerising or that Disneyland makes such an apt setting for a horror film. Taking more from the Lynchian thought process than the general horror rulebook, this is an ambitious undertaking. Moore's film features no real coherent narrative structure, instead allowing the viewer to make sense of this visual acid trip. The array of imagery can become overpowering, but all the same, *Escape From Tomorrow* demands to be at least tried.

It could be a play on the Disney brand's transportative power, it could be a play on a Disney fairytale or it could (most likely) be a film about death and our idea of paradise. Whatever the case, the film crazily jumps from scene to scene, eventually losing you in its mad, meandering mindset, but it is not without its moments of gravitas, thanks to wicked scoring by Abel Korzeniowski. How much you ultimately enjoy this film (if that is the right word) depends highly on personal taste and considering horror is already

among the most subjective of genres, that is saying something.

Some will label this film unwatchable, and it is disappointing that it feels so jumpy and fragmented in terms of what it is trying to get across. That said, it's a beautiful disaster, and it also boasts a very committed central performance by Abramsohn, who manages to strike tragic and comic chords as the lead character Jim.

Like a naked jog through a nunnery, *Escape From Tomorrow* is wrong on so many levels and yet bizarrely and inescapably gutsy. Disney is choosing to ignore the film, but a lawsuit could well have been on the cards. In the end, *Escape From Tomorrow* is a cult gem in the making that will be loathed by some and loved by others (and freak out the rest). Like a nightmare after a Disney movie marathon, it is illogical, unsettling, disturbing and yet, in many ways, quite unavoidably beautiful.

Extras: None

JACK BOTTOMLEY

+++++ 7



CAMP DREAD

DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: HARRISON SMITH / STARRING: ERIC ROBERTS, DANIELLE HARRIS / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 23RD

Eric Roberts stars in *Camp Dread*, a summer camp-set (in case you hadn't guessed from the title) slasher film about an aged horror director who ships a group of awful youngsters off to star in his reality show-camp-horror reboot. If this were the nineties, we'd be calling it postmodern. Alas, *Camp Dread* is too dated even for that. Post-postmodern isn't a thing yet, so we're stuck

with this desperately uncool dinosaur of a slasher feature, for the time being.

Roberts and modern Scream Queen Danielle Harris (the best of today's bunch, by this reviewer's reckoning) headline *Camp Dread*, but neither are around for long. Roberts appears once every ten minutes or so, smugly sneering from behind a laptop screen, while Harris's screen

time amounts to little more than a glorified cameo as the town sheriff.

Front and centre are the game's contestants, a terrible gang of reprobates who spend most of their time either having sex, trying to have sex, Twittering or overusing the word 'douchebag'. With its abundance of laptops, mobile phones and, um, digital picture frames (an actual plot point, believe it or not), *Camp Dread* is like spending your evening with a classroom full of naughty teenagers who won't put down their phones for long enough to have so much as one measly conversation. It's fine to acknowledge that this modern technology exists, but too many horror films fail to integrate the stuff into their stories without it seeming annoying, facile and stupid. Just like *Camp Dread*'s characters, for that matter.

As the film begins bumping off its characters, one by one, it does become slightly more bearable. Its giallo-esque, old school death sequences are gratifyingly gory and vicious, with one early eyeball gag

being particularly effective. The ever-reliable Roberts gives good sleaze, being one of the few actors capable of looking slimy even while wearing glasses. He could do with more screen time, but at least he gets more to do than most actors in such low-budget, straight to DVD movies (we're looking at you, Danny Trejo).

In spite of Eric Roberts, Danielle Harris and a couple of other minor redeeming factors, *Camp Dread* is, ultimately, quite dread-ful.

Extras: None

JOEL HARLEY

+++++ 4





THE GUILLOTINES

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: ANDREW LAU / SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: ETHAN JUAN, PURBA RYAL / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 30TH

The title may befit a punk rock band or anarchic straight-to-DVD horror film, but *The Guillotines* is, in actuality, anything but. A Chinese *wuxia* (martial arts adventure) film steeped in history and politics, it's about as not-punk as one can get.

There's a definite audience for *The Guillotines*,

which looks incredible and is very well written, but there's perhaps even more who will be turned off by the whole thing. Even the story is difficult to describe, without getting into paragraphs full of context and drama. In brief (which is something this lengthy movie could never be accused of being),

the eponymous Guillotines are a team of elite assassins operating in Qing Dynasty China, acting as their emperor's headsman. The once-favoured assassins are deemed expendable as advances in technology threaten to make them – and their beautiful toys – redundant.

Chief reason to see *The Guillotines* is for its depiction of the team's weapons – a curved blade with a detachable head on a string used to, well, detach heads. The film's fight scenes are well done, being grand, balletic and gory in equal measure (as you'd expect from a film with such a title, there's a good deal of beheading action). Directed by Infernal Affairs choreographer and director Andrew Lau, it certainly looks the part, with an attention to detail that extends to its writing, costumes and politics. Reminiscent of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and *The Four*, it's as beautiful as it is violent.

With so much going for it, it's a shame that *The Guillotines* is defiantly hard

to get into. There are no allowances made for those not so clued-up on their Chinese history, nor those who've just tuned in to see heads getting separated from their bodies. It's very impressive, but that doesn't always translate to a good viewing experience. Beyond the pretty visuals, fancy footwork and nifty knives, it's all very much an acquired taste that some will simply have no time for.

Fans of *wuxia* and the historically accurate (give or take the odd steampunk beheading sword) should find much to enjoy with *The Guillotines*, which offers a little more than your standard beat 'em up flick. Alas, everyone else is likely to be by turns bored, perplexed and irritated by this overly serious genre piece. It has a good heart, but far too sensible a head on its shoulders.

Extras: TBC

JOEL HARLEY

+++++++ 6



PIT AND THE PENDULUM (1961)

BD / CERT: 12 / DIRECTOR: ROGER CORMAN / SCREENPLAY: RICHARD MATHESON / STARRING: VINCENT PRICE, BARBARA STEELE, JOHN KERR / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The second of the Vincent Price/Roger Corman collaborations from the 1960s, in which the duo brought to life (with some fairly liberal interpretations) some of Edgar Allan Poe's most famous tales, *The Pit and the Pendulum* is 76 minutes of glorious, colourful, melodramatic perfection.

Set in 16th century Spain, it tells the story of Francis Barnard (Kerr) who has travelled to the castle of his brother-in-law Nicholas Medina (Price) to learn more

about the death of his sister Elizabeth (Steele). He is met by his grief stricken brother-in-law who, after initially trying to fob him off with the tale that she died of a blood infection, eventually admits that she succumbed to madness and was found dead of fright, locked up in the torture chamber's Iron Maiden. From this point on, almost nothing is as it seems and one of the story's chief delights is the way in which it sets a series of enjoyably macabre surprises within a context of some very familiar

but nonetheless effectively spooky ghost story clichés. The plaintive notes of a harpsichord echoing down the castle's empty corridors at night, for example, is something that is so chillingly realised that, if you aren't already watching it in bed, will have you wishing you had a duvet to pull up to your nose when viewing the scene alone.

Such an approach to horror could only ever benefit from the presence of Vincent Price and here, playing a man increasingly convinced that he may have buried his wife alive, he is at his haunted, deranged best. As his seemingly doomed wife, Barbara Steele is a hypnotic and unsettling presence, with her uncanny and beguiling physiognomy used to its very best here. For such a beautiful woman, Steele was always capable of unnerving an audience, particularly with those eyes, which are utilised in one particularly memorable shot that may induce a few nightmares.

However, if you already know all this, then there's a good chance that what you really want to know is: how does it look? How do all those rich colours and that lush, often psychedelic

palette that Corman employed in these films come across on the Blu-ray release? Very well indeed is the answer, with Arrow's work once again bringing to glorious life the saturated Technicolor that horror films of the period often favoured.

But it's the extras that really push this disc into the realm of essential purchases. The best of these is Price narrating a selection of Poe stories to a spellbound studio audience and watching this, one can only marvel at the charisma of the man as he makes these stories come alive with a passion and intensity few could match. Add to this two commentaries (one from Corman), a very enjoyable making-of documentary and some wonderful artwork commissioned especially for this release, and you have another superb effort from Arrow that does full justice to a film that is at last receiving the treatment it has always so richly deserved.

Extras: See above

PHIL BERESFORD

+++++++ 9



JULIA X

DVD + BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: P.J. PETTITTE / SCREENPLAY: MATT CUNNINGHAM / STARRING: KEVIN SORBO, VING RHAMES, JOEL DAVID MOORE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Firstwhile TV Hercules Kevin Sorbo takes the lead as a creepy serial killer in *Julia X*, a distinctly odd torture thriller with a twist. It's something of a cliché that Internet dates in horror films usually end up with someone being tied up and tortured – something the eponymous *Julia* quickly finds out for herself when Sorbo's Stranger throws her in the back of his van, chains her up and brands her with his signature 'X'.

The first twenty minutes

or so of *Julia X* reside firmly in hackneyed city, with both characters behaving almost exactly as you would expect them to. Only the fact that Sorbo listens to *The Carpenters*' "They Long To Be (Close to You)" on his iPod as he kills saves it from complete mundanity. Forever associated with Homer and Marge's wedding dance in *The Simpsons*, it's an amusingly weird (and suitably creepy) piece to be playing in a low-budget torture

film. Beyond that, however, it seems as though we're in for a depressingly predictable ride.

And then, somewhere around the half hour mark, *Julia X* kicks into gear. Not only does *Julia* herself begin fighting back, but Sorbo starts having fun too. By the time Joel David Moore shows up, you'll find yourself beginning to actually enjoy *Julia X*. "Julie Andrews is a national treasure!" a furious Kevin Sorbo snarls, in the heat of battle. Unpredictable, surprisingly witty and enjoyably violent, it becomes a great little game of cat and mouse between Sorbo and the film's surprise antagonists. Sorbo gives a fantastic performance as *The Stranger*, obviously having fun with this subversion of his usual smooth, nice guy persona. The script gives him some great lines, most notably the wonderful Julie Andrews bit. It's a career best for an actor usually typecast in cheap sci-fi and fantasy television movies. The female characters fare slightly less well, but they're still a cut above the usual damsel-in-distress archetypes

they could have been. Tied to a chair for most of the film, Joel David Moore isn't given much to do, but he still oozes charisma and sympathy. *Julia X* is not sure why Ving Rhames (!) is here, but we're glad he is.

A funny, smart horror farce, *Julia X* is a delightful surprise, sidestepping cliché with wit, style and snark. It may be cheap and occasionally too silly for its own good, but it most definitely has the X-factor.

Extras: None

JOEL HARLEY

+++++ 7



KOYAANISQATSI (1982) & POWAQQATSI (1988)
BD / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: GODFREY REGGIO / SCREENPLAY: GODFREY REGGIO, RON FRICKE, MICHAEL HOENIG, ALTON WALPOLE, KEN RICHARDS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Still as groundbreaking as the day they were released, this duo of documentary-style films continue to bewitch and beguile viewers, while also prompting debate and reflection on the human condition and the effect of technology.

Both films are a collection of stunningly filmed vignettes which highlight everyday life and the natural beauty of the world, inspired by Hopi Indian philosophies and set to the music of Philip Glass.

Koyaanisqatsi (Life out of Balance) contrasts images of cloud formations, waves, and sprawling landscapes with the hustle and bustle of modern life. Filmed, mainly by Ron Fricke, using several techniques including time-lapse and fast/slow-motion, it's a breathtaking experience. The lack of sound effects, dialogue or narration adds a surreal quality to some of the images. Glass' score is as mesmerising and hypnotic as the visuals, making it an

exhilarating and striking experience. *Powaqqatsi* (Life in Transformation) explores the effect modern Western technology is having on the developing nations of the 'Third World'. Without preaching or laying blame, it shows how progress can have a negative effect on old cultures as well as triumphant success.

While it's a fantastic set, it does seem to be a somewhat missed opportunity to not include the final film in the trilogy, *Naqoyqatsi* (2002), as the US Criterion edition did. The picture quality, as one would expect from Blu-ray, is brilliant, although does vary occasionally due to the use of different formats during the production: some stock footage particularly looks grainy, but this is used very sparingly. As well as the films, there are two featurettes in which Regio and Glass discuss the films, and the short *Anima Mundi* (1992) which focuses on the animal kingdom in the same style as the 'Qatsi' films. The package also includes a superb, informative booklet with new writing on the films and several stills, presented in a landscape format (as are the digibook

cases) which exudes quality.

Reggio has often said he purposely didn't set any 'meaning' into the films; it's up to the viewer to make their own interpretations. Regardless of what you take from it, the result is never less than spellbinding.

Extras: New, restored digital transfers of *Koyaanisqatsi* and *Powaqqatsi*, approved by director Godfrey Reggio, with 5.1 surround DTS-HD Master Audio soundtracks / Introduction by filmmaker and composer Gary Tan (Black Sun, The Prophet) / Interviews with Reggio and composer Philip Glass on the making of *Koyaanisqatsi* and *Powaqqatsi* / *Anima Mundi* (1992): Reggio's 28-minute montage of over seventy animal species, scored by Philip Glass / Original theatrical trailers for *Koyaanisqatsi* and *Powaqqatsi* / Illustrated collector's booklet featuring new writing on the films by Anton Bitel, Michael Brooke, Peter Cowie and Jean-Baptiste Gouyon

MARTIN UNSWORTH

+++++ 9



RE-ANIMATOR (1985)

DVD + BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: STUART GORDON / SCREENPLAY: DENNIS PAOLI, WILLIAM NORRIS, STUART GORDON / STARRING: JEFFREY COMBS, BARBARA CRAMPTON, BRUCE ABBOTT / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

God bless gore movies. Sitting through Stuart Gordon's *Re-Animator* is the equivalent of scrubbing your face with a blue steak and washing your eyes with moonshine. In many ways, too, the 1985 horror comedy classic's outlandish, albeit deadpan, manner is reflected directly in the boundary-pushing figure of Dr Herbert West (Combs) – totally brilliant but definitely a few sandwiches short of a picnic.

It's not bad at all for a director making his big screen debut

and whose background was in political theatre. Gordon and his team treated the genre – and the source material – with the utmost respect, but their 'more is more' approach to the blood and guts quota, along with scenes of a striking transgressive nature, ensured *Re-Animator* would enter the annals of cult cinema history.

The film is loosely based on H.P. Lovecraft's short story, *Herbert West – Reanimator*, a minor work serialised in an amateur rag titled *Home Brew*. It might not

be as well-known as the iconic short stories and novellas, but the piece does boast the fine distinction of introducing Miskatonic University into horror fiction lore.

Herbert West is a young medical student/nutcase whose aims can be read, theoretically, as entirely worthy. Pushing and revising the rules is a key remit in medical discovery and endeavour. Conquering death and bringing recently deceased people back to life is less an affront to nature and more a continuation of our traditional technological role in shaping our progress and history. Humankind is certainly malleable, but are the laws of nature? Of course, the subtext of the drama must be conservative and reactionary – creating life without the role of the female figure is seen as an aberration and all hell breaks loose when West's super-serum is injected into a dead cat and then into a host of human species.

The film's tone is akin to Lucio Fulci meeting *The Three Stooges* in a morgue. There will be blood. Lots of

it. *Re-Animator* splashes the claret around like a butcher going loco in an abattoir. It's sublime! Today's use of CGI blood and other hard drive-built desecrations of the flesh are no substitute for an old-school concoction of blood caps, food colouring, latex foam, plastic tubing, pigs' innards and other viscera. *Re-Animator* proves such a notion, with aplomb.

Extras: Director's Commentary / Actors' and Producer Commentary / Making-of documentary / Deleted and Extended Scenes / Interviews / Behind-the-Scenes Gallery / Production Stills Gallery / Trailers

MARTYN CONTERIO

+++++++ 8



THE SACRAMENT

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: TI WEST / STARRING: JOE SWANBERG, AJ BOWEN, AMY SEIMETZ, GENE JONES, KENTUCKER AUDLEY / RELEASE DATE: JULY 7TH

Eagerly awaited, the latest from writer/director West builds up the tension and anxiety to lead up to the inevitable, but devastatingly tragic climax.

Sam (Bowen) and Jake (Swanberg) provide investigative content for the alternative news website, Vice. When they learn the sister of their friend, Patrick (Audley) has gone missing

from her drug rehabilitation programme and taken abroad by a cult, the journalists decide to make an immersive documentary of their trip to the reclusive commune known as Eden Parish with the intention of rescuing Caroline (Seimetz). They are told it's a peaceful, loving place but they get an uneasy feeling when they are met from their helicopter by security

guards toting guns. Their pilot instructs them to be there before 9am the following day, or he will leave without them. However, when they get to the compound, Caroline makes it clear she does not want to leave, so they request to interview a few people, including the group's leader, known as 'Father' (Jones). He obliges them, but takes their inquisitiveness as hostile, out-talking them the whole time, which only makes them even more suspicious of his true motives.

With its roots in several real-life cases, West's (literal) cult movie is a terrifying study of extremism and brain-washing. Although, the approach is fairly unbiased, allowing for some shocks and surprises along the way. Jones is brilliant as the smooth-talking, enigmatic, Southern Gentleman in charge of the hyper-religious community. The scene in which 'Father' is interviewed by Sam is full of apprehension and knife-edge atmosphere. Yet, so charismatic is this leader that it's hard to argue against his reasons for leaving 'society'

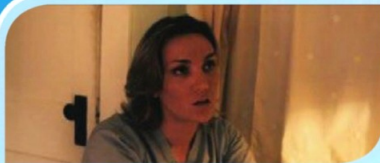
behind. Faced with outsiders, possibly offering a way out, the cracks in the retreat's beliefs begin to show, and the situation escalates at an alarming pace.

Using a pseudo-documentary approach (not found footage as some have commented, although the obligatory POV shots and shaky-cam shooting are all present), West manages to put us right in the middle of the drama. It also allows the impressive and affecting score by Tyler Bates (*Sucker Punch*) to work its magic and provide a constant feeling of dread and disquiet. Although it will no doubt be labelled 'horror' due to West's previous output, and the prominence of Eli Roth's production credit in the publicity, *The Sacrament* is more akin to horrific social commentary. Rewarding, compelling viewing for those prepared to give it a chance.

Extras: TBC

MARTIN UNSWORTH

+++++++ 8



ALL THE DEVIL'S ALIENS

VOD / CERT: NR / DIRECTOR: DANIEL FALICKI / SCREENPLAY: DANIEL FALICKI, RYAN LIESKE, LISA MUELLER / STARRING: DAVID GRIES, LISA MUELLER, JOSEPH SCOTT ANTHONY / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Medical student Mike is offered a job as one of a team of carers for a cantankerous recluse living in isolation in a country home about whom bizarre rumours abound. However, upon arriving he is greeted by a nurse fleeing the house in hysterics, then put-upon but cheerful chief carer Robin relaying some odd rules he must follow, and numerous bouts of coughing, spluttering and muffled obscenities coming from his charge Pinborough via an audio monitor. But when he begins seeing strange figures skulking in the shadows and hears tales of unexplained

disappearances, it becomes apparent there are other forces at work.

All the Devil's Aliens is a curious piece of filmmaking. The harsh lighting and grainy film stock give it the feel of another example of the current horror trend for faux grindhouse, but its lack of ostentation or referential self-awareness serves to separate it from such efforts. Also, not many exploitation flicks boast an opening quotation from The Merchant of Venice to prime its audience with a clue regarding its central premise. Were it not for the foreboding atmosphere and

mysterious figures flitting past the camera, you could almost mistake it for a melodrama.

The film was quite clearly shot on a minuscule budget, but was done so in a way that skilfully disguises its limited resources. The simple plot allows almost the entire story to take place in a single setting, a creaky old building supplying all the darkened crevices necessary to hide its mysterious occupants. The human mind is always more fearful about what it can't see rather than what it can, a reaction Falicki uses to full effect. The natural darkness of the house allows the silhouetted humanoid to remain hidden even when in shot, then the sudden jolt of revealing movement that makes you question what you're even seeing serves to freak you out with far more precision than any histrionic close up of a snarling monstrosity ever could.

Character development is often a casualty of horror filmmaking, but the conversations between Mike and Robin during the lulls of Pinborough's demands and verbal assaults effectively paint them as real people with personalities and

dreams, and when Pinborough himself is revealed in all his white-eyed, pale-skinned and utterly insane glory, he completely steals the spotlight.

Given how effective his filmmaking style is in establishing an atmosphere of quiet dread, it's a shame that Falicki felt it necessary to include overstated music to bluntly signpost how the audience is supposed to feel at any given moment. You can practically hear Brick Tamland declaring "I AM BEING OMINOUS!" as the orchestral crescendos gradually overwhelm all other sound.

While by no means a classic in any sense of the word, All the Devil's Aliens still marks itself as being made with more thought and enthusiasm than many studio-backed mainstream films with vastly bigger budgets. A fusion of horror, drama and conspiracy theory, its novel approach to what could have easily been a clichéd story makes it worth seeking out.

Extras: None

ANDREW MARSHALL



AEON: THE LAST VAMPIRE ON EARTH

VOD / CERT: NR / DIRECTOR: DANIEL FALICKI / SCREENPLAY: WARREN CROYLE, RYAN LIESKE / STARRING: APRIL BASILE, DANIEL FALICKI, CHRIS EDDY / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Expectations aren't likely to be too high for Aeon: The Last Vampire on Earth, shot on a budget of \$1 million and with just one main location and only two cast members dominating the screen for most of its ninety-odd minute running time. But director/actor Falicki isn't interested in visual wham-bam; his film is a surprisingly gripping two-hander which discusses the nature and purpose of humanity, existential angst and religion. This ain't no action film, this is a movie which uses the idea of one human being and one vampire – the last vampire, if you will – to consider the

meaning of life and the point of it all as they represent the last of their respective species in a world coming to an end. A barrel of laughs it isn't.

As some unspecified cataclysm ravages the Earth, Catherine Murnau (Basile) stumbles into a gloomy warehouse which has been the prison of a scorched, crippled creature called Aeon (Falicki). With humanity fallen, Aeon seizes the opportunity to indulge himself by engaging the terrified Murnau in a lengthy, detailed debate about human nature, the meaning of life, the place and purpose of religion in a now Godless,

wiped-out world. Murnau, for her part, finds herself defending her dead species and trying to justify Mankind's existence and the spirit of humanity and all it's ever believed in and achieved even as the planet falls to pieces around them.

It's not difficult to imagine Aeon as some low-key agitprop stage production; it's certainly a script which would lend itself well to the intimacy of live performance and yet, despite its lack of incident and its verbosity, it works well as a movie. There's always something compelling and fascinating about two people arguing from diametrically opposed viewpoints and never more so than when one of them is a frightened human being and the other is a cynical undead monster which has lived too long and experienced too much. Trapped and decaying, Aeon is never a real threat to Murnau except on an intellectual level; her determination and ability to counter his relentless nihilism and maintain her humanity in the face of his ferocious, desperate hunger and the extinction of her species gives the movie a dynamism and drive which is never dampened by its lack of

incident and spectacle. Aeon himself, charred and ruined, is a vampire torn from our worst Gothic nightmares and even when Murnau tries to quite literally crush his physical essence towards the end of the movie, the last vampire still won't surrender to the inevitable. It's as if he refuses to become extinct until Murnau, the very last human, is gone and the human race is finally no more and his point is proven.

Aeon: The Last Vampire on Earth deftly defies the limitations of its minuscule budget and presents a bleak and yet potent examination of both the fragility and the enduring strength of the human spirit in the most extreme and fantastical of situations. Wordy, claustrophobic and stifling, Aeon is a vampire film with real bite and a timely reminder that there's still more to the undead in the movies than Robert Pattinson's bloodless antics. One to look out for.

Extras: None

PAUL MOUNT



TOO LATE BLUES

directed by
JOHN CASSAVETES



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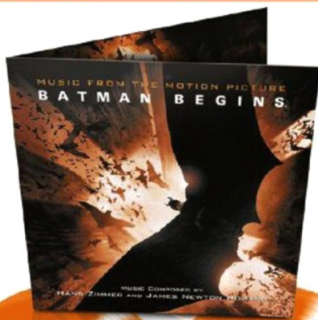
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ON BLU-RAY & DVD THIS JULY

OST

THE STARBURST
GUIDE TO THE LATEST
SOUNDTRACKS
BY NICK SPACEK



The big news in the past month is that everything coming out on vinyl is delayed something wicked. By all accounts, thanks to Record Store Day, it's now something like a 6-7 week delay to get a record pressed. Because of this – in addition to the printing places that produce jackets and so on – One Way Static's **Cannibal Ferox** has been pushed back to the middle of this month, which is in turn delaying their announcements of the release which will follow it.

Because of delays like this, it's no surprise that many labels are now waiting until they've material in hand to start taking orders.

Silva Screen Records is set to repress the **Batman Begins** score by Hans Zimmer and James Newton Howard. The label had previously released the soundtrack back in 2012, in advance of **The Dark Knight Rises**. That version was 500 copies on 180-gram black vinyl, while demand seems to have pushed up the numbers for the orange vinyl repress to 1000. Hopefully, it won't sell out as quickly as the original (which routinely fetches well over £50 on the secondary market, if not more).

Giallo Disco is set to put out their first actual soundtrack as their next release. While the label's done five releases thus far, they can all be said to be "inspired" by film scores, rather than soundtracking any real movies. That changes with their sixth release, Volkan Akaalp's score to Can Evrenol's **Baskin**. It's a Turkish film, about 'four cops responding to a routine call and discover a Lovecraftian cult whose quarters hide the very horrors



that should only belong in Hell!" The piece that scores the trailer is extraordinarily disconcerting, and will fit right in with the label's previous releases.

Bryan Singer returns to the X-Men universe with **Days of Future Past**, and with him comes **X-Men 2** composer John Ottman. It's out now on compact disc via Okeh, but Music on Vinyl will have it out on LP sometime soon, according to a Facebook post made by the label. There's no release date as of yet. It's certainly a bombastic score, when necessary, but it's also surprisingly subtle for a superhero film. Ottman's primary use of strings for the majority of the film makes the pulse of the brass on pieces like *Hat Rescue* and *Time's Up* that much more intense. It gets a little tinny when the electric guitar or synths work their way in, but overall, it complements the film very well. It's not necessarily a stand-alone listen, though.

Later this summer, new label SPACELAB9 releases **The Raid 2** score on double vinyl LP. The score, by Joseph Trapanese, along with Aria Prayogi and Fajar Yuskemal, is a continuation of their work on the original picture, and it's nice to see that their music was retained for the sequel's release. It is, as one would expect, strong on percussion and throbbing electronics, and highly recommended as the soundtrack to your next workout. The compact disc is out now, as well as digital download.

Perseverance Records has been on a tear lately, with the second volume of **Knight Rider** music by composer Don Peake, who's received a bit more recognition as of late, thanks to One Way Static's **The Hills Have Eyes** reissue last year. The first volume of music from the '80s David Hasselhoff vehicle sold so well that the second volume has come quickly on the heels of the first. Each volume features the music to several episodes of





the popular program, each as one lengthy, full-episode suite, and the second volume features the theme remixed as a dance cut.

Italy's BTF reissued the Ennio Morricone score to *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* at the beginning of this month. This is long out-of-print on vinyl (although Cinevox released a CD back in 2008), and an absolute masterwork. According to BTF, this is the first vinyl reissue to feature the original score in stereo. It comes with new artwork made by Adventprod Studios, with the first 500 copies on red vinyl with a special 30x30cm insert featuring flyers and lobby cards of the movie. Seriously – if you thought you knew Morricone, there's so much more to the composer than just spaghetti westerns, and this is absolutely the place to start. It's uncomfortable and absolutely gorgeous. His use of vocals as instrumentation was never greater than it was here.

In what might be this month's most interesting release, German jazz-fusion quartet Gerwin Eisenhauer's *Booom* has *Music From Videogames* out now on Enja Records. It is, as one might guess, jazz fusion renditions of music from videogames. It starts out with music from *Pokémon*, moves on to *Pac-Man*, *The Legend of Zelda*, *Doom* and more. It's wide-ranging in terms of genre, and it

seems that the quartet plays music that's sonically interesting, rather than simply going for name recognition. The dub take on the *Space Invaders* theme is particularly intriguing, and I've yet to hear a version of the *Super Mario* theme I didn't like.

My favorite new release is the Tyler Bates score to the latest film from director Ti West, entitled *The Sacrament*. The film's a tense, nerves-on-edge piece of filmmaking that, while scary, isn't the horror in which West has worked in the past for films like *The Innkeepers* and *House of the Devil*. The *Sacrament* revolves around a Vice film crew in an unnamed country, visiting a cultish compound to find one of the crew's missing sister. Tyler Bates' music is a mix of pulse-pounding energy and incredibly sparse chimes. The chimes and bells have a natural, almost random sound to them – echoing the uncertainty of the characters in the film. It's haunting, yet beautiful. The addition of certain, key dialogue gives the rather unstructured music a framework, and reminds those who have seen the film of the terror they are about to experience.

While not particularly "genre" in terms of the film it accompanies, any new release from Italy's Calibro 35 is something worth noting. Their score for independent film collective



John Snellinberg's *Sogni di Gloria* will be out on CD June 15, and limited edition 180-gram orange vinyl on June 22. The film's about anarchists and card players, and is a tribute to Italian comedies of the past. Calibro 35's score also attempts to use clichés such as "certain Morriconian atmospheres or lounge accordions à la Piero Piccioni combined with funk rhythms and guitar fuzz," according to Italy's Repubblica newspaper.

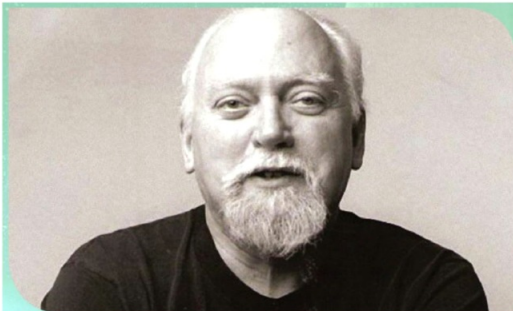
And lastly, we have the most recent release from Death Waltz Recording Company, and it's a doozy. They're releasing the Akira Ifukube score to the original 1954 *Godzilla* film, remastered from Toho's "original source material," according to *Empire*. It's been streaming online, and sounds astonishingly crisp and big. That brass really jumps out at you. Cheung Chung Tat does the artwork for the cover and inside of this gatefold LP. It comes as a standard edition on green vinyl, and a limited edition of 400 blue and white "atomic breath" vinyl. It's available worldwide, except for the United States, so our American readers are sadly out of luck on this one.

If you'd like a bit of textual accompaniment to your listening, University of Wisconsin Press in the United States recently put out an excellent book entitled *John Williams's Film Music: Jaws, Star Wars, Raiders of the Lost Ark, and the Return of the Classical Hollywood Music Style*. The book, by Emilio Audissino, is an adaptation of the author's PhD dissertation, but fear not – it's a fascinating read that takes you on a journey from the early days of film, all the way up to Williams' most recent work. The book focuses on the three films mentioned in the title, but everything the great composer's done is touched on at one point or another. Critical analysis of his work is examined and refuted, as is the list of influences from whom Williams lifted. What might make the book most worth looking at, however, is a scene-by-scene analysis of each and every musical cue in *Raiders*. It's a masterful examination of just how Williams works, and the highlight of an already-fascinating read.



BRAVE NEW WORDS

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NEWS FROM
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GENRE LITERATURE



Drones versus Axes - Amazon and Hachette fight for market domination

Multinational publisher Hachette Book Group have become embroiled in a fight for supremacy with Online superstore Amazon. As part of a series of pricing negotiations, Amazon has been delaying the delivery of Hachette's books via their service. This has caused various publishing industry professionals to demand a worldwide boycott of Amazon and leading the charge is American comedian Stephen Colbert. The satirist has used his show **The Colbert Report** to encourage people to buy books via his website rather than Amazon.com and has also produced a series of mocking gimmicks. Colbert is one of Hachette's many authors; others include J.K. Rowling, Sarah Lotz and Kim Stanley Robinson.

Pull THE COSMIC TRIGGER

A stage adaptation of anarchist author Robert Anton Wilson's autobiographical book **The Cosmic Trigger** is currently in the works. The genius behind this project is Daisy Eris Campbell, the daughter of experimental theatre director Ken Campbell. Ken attempted to bring *The Illuminatus* series to stage in 1976 to mixed success. This new production promises to bring together the likes of Alan Moore and Jamie Reid to help tell the story of Bob Wilson. Those interested should take a look at IndieGoGo.com for more information, as the project is in need of funding, preferably in sums relating to the number 23.

WHEEL OF TIME Rolls into The Hugo Awards

Those booked to attend Loncon 3, The 72nd World Science Fiction Convention were bemused recently when the entire **Wheel of Time** series was made available for their perusal. Traditionally, electronic versions of the Hugo Award Nominees are made available to those voting for the Hugo Awards via a thing called the Hugo Voters' Packet. Only Attendees and Convention supporters are allowed to vote. Because of the unique way books are counted as eligible for the Hugo Awards, the entire three and a half million word series is up for an award. That's a lot to get through before the award ceremony this August.

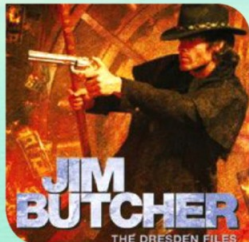
Puffin Augment SKYLANDERS

Children's publisher Puffin have ventured into the world of Augmented Reality with their new **Skylanders** book, **SWAP Force: Master Eon's Official Guide**. A special smart phone app allows readers to interact with the characters on the page. This gimmick is in keeping with the **Skylanders** toy range, which relies on clever electronic innovations to keep its pre-teen fans interested.



Harry Dresden weaves his magic on the book charts

Jim Butcher's popular **Dresden Files** series has smashed its way across the book charts following the release of the latest novel, **Skin Game**. This success is partially due to a promotion that allowed new readers to pick up other novels in the fifteen-book series at a substantial discount.



ED FORTUNE
HIGHLIGHTS SIX
NOTEWORTHY
NEW TITLES

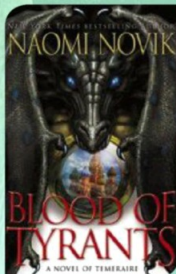
COMING SOON



FALL OF MACHARIUS (THE MACHARIAN CRUSADE)

AUTHOR: WILLIAM KING
PUBLISHER: BLACK LIBRARY
RELEASE DATE: JULY 22ND

William King draws to a close his trilogy about one of Warhammer 40,000's iconic heroes, Lord Solar Macharius. The series has been a little bit lackluster so far, focusing less on the events of The Macharian Crusade and more on the incompetence of the Astrum Militarum (aka The Imperial Guard), so it's all to play for in this last book.



BLOOD OF TYRANTS

AUTHOR: NAOMI NOVIK
PUBLISHER: DEL REY
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Those of us who have been patiently waiting for the paperback version of **Blood of Tyrants** will be rewarded this month. Novik's reimagining of the Napoleonic wars with dragons continues into its eighth volume and introduces Japan into the mix. As France and Russia begin to war amongst themselves, it's up to a beleaguered British aviator to find new allies and possibly even save his nation.



HELLHOLE: INFERNO

AUTHOR: B. HERBERT, K. ANDERSON
PUBLISHER: TOR BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 12TH

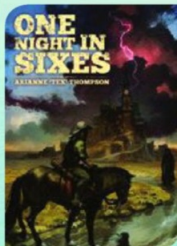
The **Hellhole Trilogy** was always doomed to end in fire; what else would you expect from this epic series? Herbert and Anderson's long story about the planet of Hellhole and its freakish inhabitants comes to a conclusion as the Dowager Queen triggers off a sequence of events that could cause the Xayans to reboot the entire universe. Those who like their science-fiction so fantastic that it practically has dragons and wizards in it will be looking forward to this one.



FIEFDOM

AUTHOR: DAN ABNETT
PUBLISHER: REBELLION
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 14TH

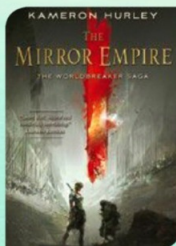
2000AD has a rich back catalogue and Rebellion have begun to experiment with this resource by producing novels based on their more popular series. **Kingdom** was a pun-driven post-apocalyptic adventure series featuring a genetically engineered dog person called Gene The Hackman. **Fiefdom** picks up on the action from this series 100 years after the events of the comic book. Rich with ideas and laden with strange new words, **Fiefdom** could well be the start of something wonderful.



ONE NIGHT IN SIXES

AUTHOR: ARIANNE 'TEX' THOMPSON
PUBLISHER: SOLARIS
RELEASE DATE: JULY 31ST

Tex's debut wild west fantasy tale promises gunslingers, shapeshifters and ancient animal gods in a style that combine the darkness of both Stephen King and Joe Abercrombie. Weird West stories are becoming more in vogue at the moment and we have high hopes for this exciting new series and keen new author.



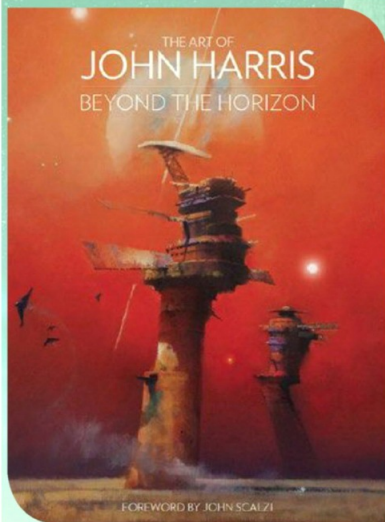
THE MIRROR EMPIRE

AUTHOR: KAMERON HURLEY
PUBLISHER: ANGRY ROBOT
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 26TH

Kameron Hurley gained a strong following with her award winning **Bel Dame Apocrypha** series and the **Worldbreaker Saga** is tipped to repeat this success. Set on the eve of a global war, it promises all the things that delighted us about the first set of books: interesting and multi-faceted female protagonists, complex world histories, terrible cults and exotic cultures.

REVIEWS

THE LATEST RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED



THE ART OF JOHN HARRIS: BEYOND THE HORIZON

AUTHOR: JOHN HARRIS / PUBLISHER: TITAN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

For fans of sci-fi and art, John Harris is more than likely a familiar name, his work having fed into the genre since the mid-'70s. For the uninitiated, imagine Monet-painted spaceships. He presents the

future as something real, filled with wonder but also danger, moving from sweeping landscapes to broken vessels.

The book itself is beautifully and simply presented, some pages

offering an insight into the composition and evolution of a given piece, but often the paintings need only themselves. The dates too, are often irrelevant, as his body of work is timeless; some hark back to classic '30s sci-fi like Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers, while others are moodier, the palette comprised of purples and blacks: The Twin Parliaments of Pyrrhus is a particularly overwhelming example.

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of the collection, and indeed Harris' work, is that it incorporates all sci-fi. Some of the paintings like The Big Generator and Noise are reminiscent of Blade Runner's resident futurist Syd Mead, while others evoke prog-rock cover artist Roger Dean's hallucinogenic landscapes, and some of them are altogether more abstract, specifically those in the Beyond the Horizon chapter, comprised of textures and surfaces.

While his art is all-encompassing, it's also fun to cherry-pick your favourites; from Migration which conjures Ra's pyramid ship over the Abydos desert in the Stargate motion picture, to Armies of Memory, which is reminiscent of the Citadel in the Mass Effect trilogy, with more than a few winks to Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey.

Harris' paintings never appear static, he captures motion in his work. There's a preoccupation with mass,

machinery and wreckages in space that, while weightless in the vacuum, are vast, from wounded spaceships, to huge red planets that dominate the canvases and debris that tells a story only by its presence.

The book is broken into chapters, each focusing on specific themes and elements of his work. Floating Mass will really get sci-fi fans salivating. While most of the paintings are strictly impressionist and imaginative realism, some of the works are more tangible and informed by speculative thought, bridging the space between art and innovation.

The collection showcases Harris' thirty-plus-year career, offering the reader a chance to admire the ambition and evolution of an artist. There's a symbiosis on display, his work inspiring others who then inspire him. The back of the book collates those of his pictures that have adorned the work of some of sci-fi's most interesting writers, from Orson Scott Card (Ender's Game, Ultimate Iron Man) to John Scalzi (Old Man's War series, Redshirts), who wrote the forward.

There's no need for any prior understanding of art to appreciate this collection, or indeed a love of sci-fi (though it definitely helps). The paintings tap into something primal, a part of you that may very well be comfortable with Harris' portrayal of the future.

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

+++++ 9





THE LEOPARD

AUTHOR: K.V. JOHANSEN
PUBLISHER: RANDOM HOUSE
INTERNATIONAL
RELEASE DATE: JULY 10TH

There is something heart-warmingly old-fashioned about K.V. Johansen's latest novel, *The Leopard*. The fantasy genre is currently full to the brim with gritty and post-modern versions of *A Game of Thrones* or overly dark retellings of *Lord of the Rings*. The Leopard bucks this trend by drawing on a legacy of pulp, swords and sandals-style tales reminiscent of *The Wheel of Time* series but with a classic edge that feels as if it's come from the 1950s.

The plot is nicely convoluted. The titular Leopard is an assassin, called Ahjvar, suffering from a rather nasty necromantic curse. It is a fiendishly unbreakable problem, which we'll leave vague to avoid spoilers, but it is quite wicked, if not terribly original. One of the ways he can get out of it is to murder a Voice prophet, known as the False of Markand,

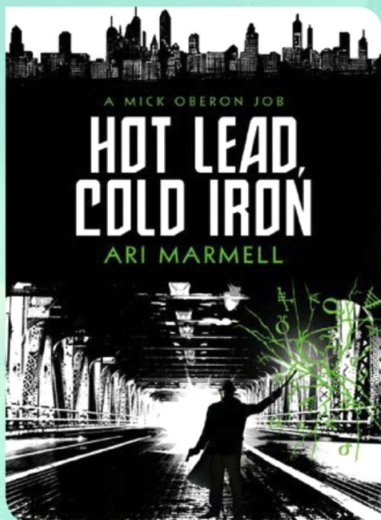
who happens to have a horde of horrific minions (called Red Masks) running across the land, causing all sorts of strife.

Ahjvar isn't a very likeable central protagonist and seems very keen to avoid getting involved in anything. Thankfully, the rest of the cast of characters keep the reader engaged. Deyandara the bard, works partially because she's also the world's most reluctant noble, and mostly because she's a strong character, with actual motivation. She's helped by the perpetually put-upon Ghu, who seems the most competent, yet least capable, member of the party. As the adventure progresses, things get even more involved, and Johansen clearly delights in thinking up new ways to surprise her readers; the novel is filled with all sorts of pleasing twists.

Johansen's style is not for everyone: there is a steady rhythm to the writing that does not change throughout the novel. It doesn't matter if the characters are sharing a meal, or fighting ghoulish minions – the pace remains painstakingly detailed throughout. Though this makes for an easy read, it also means it's a little bland at times and, coupled with a very dark tone, this may be unpalatable for some. It suffers greatly from being part one of a set – a lot of the more interesting twists and turns are clearly set-ups for the next part in the series – and this means that *The Leopard* has an unsatisfying ending, but one quite likely to leave you wanting more.

ED FORTUNE

+++++++ 7



HOT LEAD, COLD IRON

AUTHOR: ARI MARMELL / PUBLISHER: TITAN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Hot Lead, Cold Iron is the latest offering from fantasy author Ari Marmell, and it is quite a different affair from

his previous works such as *The Goblin Corps* and *The Widdershins Adventures*. The setting is Prohibition era

Chicago, where Elliott Ness and his Untouchables have accomplished the impossible by bringing down criminal overlord Al Capone, and the city is on the brink of an all-out mob war, as rival gangs fight over the remains of Capone's empire. In the midst of this is Mick Oberon, a private detective who is anything but human, despite his appearance. Oberon is among the last in a line of aristocratic fae who, for undisclosed reasons, has turned his back on his kind.

Oberon only takes mundane cases, until he reluctantly agrees to locate a gangster's missing daughter, who was replaced with a changeling sixteen years before. The cold case soon becomes hot as the trail leads him back to the corruption of the fae court, and he becomes the target of a dangerously insane witch.

Hot Lead, Cold Iron is as hard boiled a detective drama as anything written by Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler or Mickey Spillane, and Marmell captures the vernacular of the period wonderfully. Women are "broads", guns are "gats", and eyes are "lamps" or "peepers". And as with all the great crime fiction of the '30s and '40s, *Hot Lead, Cold Iron*'s narrative is delivered in the first person.

Marmell has also created a character that's as tough as Mike Hammer or Philip Marlowe in Mick Oberon, even if his favourite tippie is a glass of milk or, if he really feels like getting wild, cream. Instead of packing a Smith & Wesson Oberon packs a Luchitane & Goodfellow Model 1592 wand. Well, he is fae after all, and fae have difficulty using technology. A telephone, car or even just catching a subway train can cause varying levels of pain and discomfort to fae, which, as Oberon explains, is why they no longer inhabit our world. But it is, with no small degree of irony, that Oberon notes that the major fae cities are based on human cities. So the Otherworld Chicago is a mysterious hybrid of fae culture and human architecture.

Hot Lead, Cold Iron could easily have been published in any one of the popular pulp detective magazines of the '30s, and yet it's pace and characterisations are undoubtedly contemporary. The conclusion strongly hints that there will be another Mick Oberon case, and if it's as fun and entertaining as this one, then Ari Marmell will soon be crowned the foremost purveyor of Macabre Noir.

CHRISTIAN JONES

+++++++ 8



THE SEVENTH MISS HATFIELD

AUTHOR: ANNA CALTABIANO
PUBLISHER: GOLLANCZ
RELEASE DATE: JULY 17TH

Would you leave your family if it meant you had a chance at immortality? At living beyond your natural span? Some people don't know, some have concluded they definitely wouldn't, and some of us have already written notes to our families, in anticipation of such an event. The fact that we are able to answer the question to our satisfaction, makes it all the worse that the titular heroine of *The Seventh Miss Hatfield* doesn't really get a choice in the matter. The call to adventure has already been made on her behalf.

A lot of works about immortality make a big deal out of the fact that the immortal hero is destined to be alone, or has to move on

every so often, but it's rare that a work like this comes along which does such a great job of explaining quite why that is. Usually it's a line or two about how agelessness gets one noticed, which is undoubtedly true but probably not to the extent they think. But in this novel, it's all explained away with the fact that prolonged time travel makes Cynthia feel ill and out of place. Having said that, quite why she can't go back to her own time and then return once she feels better, is something we felt was unclear when reading.

However, this is an aberration in an otherwise tightly-plotted novel. 17-year-old Caltabiano also writes a romance that is amusing,

enjoyable to read and doesn't slip into using prose such as 'he took me roughly and crushed me to his chiselled chest'. One of our only complaints was that one of the revelations is almost an incidental detail, and far too telegraphed; anyone well versed in genre fiction will see it coming a mile away. However, one failing isn't enough to condemn this, which has the potential to be an ongoing story. Perhaps, in time, the seventh Miss Hatfield will prove to be as enduring in the real world as she is in the fictional one.

SCOTT VARNHAM

★★★★★★★★★★ 8



PRINCE OF FOOLS

AUTHOR: MARK LAWRENCE
PUBLISHER: HARPER VOYAGER
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Prince of Fools kicks off Mark Lawrence's highly anticipated new trilogy, *The Red Queen's War*, introducing us to a new narrator in the shape of Prince Janan Kendeth. His previous antihero, Jorg Ancrath, was

always going to be a tough act to follow but, fortunately, Lawrence has created a character who is sufficiently different.

Janan is more Jack-the-lad than Jack Carter: he's a gambler and ladies man, isn't the greatest of swordsmen, and relies mainly on his wits, and a keen sense of when to turn tail. This time, he's in serious trouble, up to his neck in debt and forced to pair up with Snorri ver Snagason, a huge Northern axeman, and all-round killing machine.

The novel draws on the usual buddy trope – they work together only because they have to, forming an initially reluctant bond that blossoms through their mutual adversity – but by placing it in the fantasy realm of *The Broken Empire*, Lawrence creates an interesting spin on it, having the pair bound by a magic that forces them on a quest. Janan's narration gives a one-sided view of events, and keen readers may

begin to wonder if he's as much of a coward as he claims to be, as if he's playing with the reader as much as he does with the other characters. As with Jorg, the narrative voice is so well-defined, it's like listening to someone telling the story, drawing the reader deeper into the book.

It's a good tale, too, moving quickly from one scene to the other while scarcely pausing for breath. Be warned, once you're in, you may find yourself still reading a hundred or more pages later, if you even stop at all. In his previous novels, Lawrence has proved adept at manipulating emotions, and that skill flourishes between the covers of *Prince of Fools*. There are moments of suspense, fear, hilarity and gut-wrenching sadness throughout, all ending in a final line of only two words, that have enough impact to set up the second book very nicely indeed.

While Janan is a more

'accessible' narrator than Jorg, it's debatable if Prince of Fools is the best place to start reading Lawrence's work. There are several in-jokes that would fly over the heads of new readers, such as guest appearances from characters, and the pace is such that the Broken Empire itself doesn't feel as richly described as it has been in previous novels.

Being a damn good fantasy writer, Lawrence has inevitably been compared with George R.R. Martin, but a more apt comparison would be with the late David Gemmell. Lawrence's characters display similar self-doubt and eventual courage, and Snagason – 'son of the axe' – smacks of affectionate tribute to Druss the Legend, all of which makes Mark Lawrence a worthy heir to Gemmell's crown.

ALISTER DAVIDSON

★★★★★★★★★★ 8



THE SUICIDE EXHIBITION

AUTHOR: JUSTIN RICHARDS
PUBLISHER: DEL REY
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

If ever it was possible to be nostalgic for a war, the Second World War is the one to pine for. Justin Richards has perfectly captured a sepia-toned world of wax-sealed envelopes, typewritten orders and Nazi supernatural conspiracies... erm, okay, we may have missed the history lesson that featured the last one. Yes, one of the obvious influences here is Indiana Jones (albeit some weird mishmash that would mix the first and third films with the fourth), although this book's version of him comes without the whip. Shame.

The narrative quickly moves from a pastiche of a

Jones-style archeological dig to a complex spy thriller reminiscent of Operation Mincemeat (a fascinating true story, incidentally) or James Bond – if James Bond had aliens in it (which, frankly, would've made for better films than *Moonraker* or *Quantum of Solace*). The aliens are interesting and have the potential to become incredibly threatening in future volumes. One thing that did bother us, was the ease with which the characters accepted somebody breaking out of a Bronze Age tomb and walking the Earth.

The title doesn't feel particularly relevant to the

story, as it only crops up a few times, and the scene that the book was presumably named for doesn't quite have the dramatic impact that Richards was going for. Nevertheless, this doesn't harm the story in any tangible way, and any kind of deficiency is more than made up for by a cast of well-developed characters and a good tale, well told. This particular tale does end on a cliffhanger, but that's no bad thing. We're looking forward to the next one.

SCOTT VARNHAM

★★★★★★★★★★ 9

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NERVE-
SHREDDING
EXPERIENCE’

Daily Mail

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VIEW FROM THE WATCHTOWER

JOEL HARLEY PULLS MONITOR DUTY TO BRING YOU THE LATEST FROM THE WORLD OF COMIC BOOKS



Doctor Doom – indicating a company-wide ban on the Richards family (plus hangers on). The news sounds a little dubious, but, well, stranger things have happened in comic book history. Either way, the rumour that both *Fantastic Four* and *Ultimate Fantastic Four* are to enter hiatus still stands. Whether it be for good reason (poor sales) or stupid reason (cutting Marvel's nose off to spite its face) remains to be seen. Like The Invisible Woman, geddit.

Elsewhere in the Marvel Universe, we see popular replacement Spider-man Miles Morales set to join The X-Men. Brian Michael Bendis shared a cover on his personal Tumblr for the upcoming *Uncanny X-Men* #139, which sees Morales front and centre, alongside the greeting 'Welcome to the X-Men, Miles Morales – Hope you survive the experience!' Peter Parker is no stranger to teamwork (being a member of The Avengers on various occasions, in spite of his vocal aversion), so it's no surprise to see Miles join in the fun. The exact mechanics have yet to be revealed (although Pete did recently discover the existence of Morales in the 616 Universe) but we're betting that the mega *Spider-Vers* will play some part.

In related news, *Spider-Vers* will also bring us the return of Dock Ock's Superior Spider-Man. He's barely been away, but August will have Superior popping up for two issues of the story. It's said to be a prologue to the main event, telling an untold story, exploring the unseen adventures of Superior's Otto Octavius, trapped in the world of 2099. Will this lead to a proper return of the surprisingly popular Superior iteration of Otto and Spidey? Well, time travel being involved, who can tell? See Superior's return in *Superior Spider-Man* #32 and #33, released this August.

Elsewhere in the Marvel Universe, we see many a dark secret revealed in *Original Sin*. As our heroes attempt to solve the mystery of The Watcher's murder, some of their shadiest secrets are uncovered. This, unsurprisingly, leads to some fallout, with The Punisher and Doctor Strange being just two of the characters being drawn into conflict as a result. It's an unlikely pairing, brought to you in *Original Sin* #4, this August.

A more obvious pairing comes in *Friend From Foe*, which sees The Punisher cross paths with The Black Widow on an abandoned oil rig. Taking place in the ninth issues of Frank and Natasha's respective comics, it has the perpetually

Just beyond the halfway point of the year, and we've had some great comics and news therein already. I've been doing this gig almost ten months now, and have yet to experience that desperate scramble for newsworthiness. That said, with June, we experience a marked lull in the goodies; with The Big Two busy with their event stories (*Original Sin* and *Future's End*, respectively) and the Indies also humked down and busy for the time being.

Still, onwards and upwards, for a look at the various things I could see from up within my watchtower (read: skimming various news websites and keeping an eye

out for anything with 'Batman' in the title) and what that could mean for our next few months' pull lists.

One of the bigger stories you'll have noticed is an uncertainty regarding the future of Marvel's First Family of superheroism – The *Fantastic Four*. Rumours circulating from Bleedingcool and Comic Book Resources have suggested that Marvel is to put its *Fantastic Four* books on hold in order to hurt Fox's upcoming (re)adaptation. Bleedingcool reported a ban on artists drawing the FF or its main cast for their sketch cards – no Mr. Fantastic, no Torch, Thing, Invisible Woman or even

angry vigilante and the cool mercenary join forces to battle villain Crossbones and his Skull Squad before the boat they're on explodes. Business as usual, then.

In a marked change from usual business, the DC Universe brings us some truly great news. Batman related news. This July marks The Batman's 75th anniversary. This is to be celebrated with a series of special issues, cartoons and collectables. The great news of which I speak, however, is the long overdue nod to the Bat's co-creator on the cover of *Detective Comics* #27. No, not Bob Kane, silly. Bill Finger, for the uninitiated, is the creator of all of Batman's most recognisable elements – from the costume to the car and the Commissioner. Dodgy contracts and Bob Kane's grandstanding, however, have meant that it's taken us seventy-five years to get to this stage – Finger's name on the cover of a Batman comic. Seventy-five years.

As part of Batman Day (July 23 – get it in your calendar!), DC Comics will release a special edition of *Detective Comics* #27, containing material from the 1939 comic and this year's New 52 issue. A freebie, it contains great work from modern Batman maestro Scott Snyder (going from strength to strength with his run), Brian Hitch, Brad Meltzer, Bob Kane and, of course, Bill Finger. Seventy. Five. Years.

Ahem. In other Batman related news (my favourite kind of news) there's the suggestion and speculation that fan favourite Damien Wayne will return from the dead in *Robin Rising: Omega*. Following this July one-shot, the comic will return to its former title of *Batman and Robin*. Many are assuming that the titular Robin will somehow be Batman's deceased son (particularly given his spotlight in the recent *Search For Robin* arc) but the creators may yet surprise us. Let's remember that the resurrection of Jason Todd didn't exactly go so well.



The Batman news continues apace with news of Harley Quinn's participation in DC's *Future's End*. This September, we'll see the wedding of Harley to her puddin', The Joker. The Clown Prince of Crime? Married? Surely not! Apparently so, as promised by writer Jimmy Palmotti to Newsarama: "It is the actual wedding. They finally get married and a lot goes weird. This is the story we think all the fans have been waiting for..." It's been a wait, to be sure. But not SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS worth of waiting.

Ahem. Again. No more Batman for now. Elsewhere in the DC Universe, we find one-time Green Lantern Kyle Rayner resurrected as a White Lantern and gifted godlike powers. Still, typically for the man whose life kickstarted the 'women in refrigerators' meme things aren't about to get any easier for poor Kyle. Harassed

by 'Oblivion' the very embodiment of his doubts and fears his plight will continue in May's *New Guardians*. It's not easy being green. Or white, apparently.

Finally from the DC Universe, a promise! John Romita Jr's Superman is almost here. The eagerly awaited *Superman* #32, from Geoff Johns and Romita Jr. is due to hit shelves at the end of June, heralded by some great-looking new artwork from the comic. We must admit, the cover looks very Spider-man...

Lastly, predictably, we shuffle over to the smaller presses for a look at some of the more interesting stories we might find there. Following the surprise success of Archie comics' *Afterlife With Archie*, *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* is to get her own dark horror title. No Melissa Joan Hart here – *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* is aiming for a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* feel with a gloomy 1960s vibe, starting with her origins. Fear not, though – the cat is still going to be in it. Appropriately, the comic is due to hit stands this October.

Carrying on with the horror theme, IDW Publishing have announced their adaptation of Jonathan Maberry's *Rot & Ruin*, due this September. Based on Maberry's hit zombie novels, the series will consist of both new and old material, introducing new characters alongside those you'll recognise from the books.

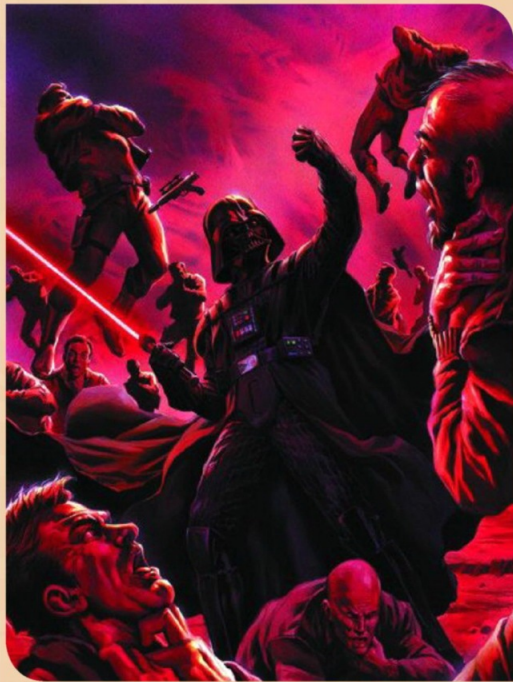
Another horror property getting itself a comic book adaptation is the Clive Barker cult hit *Nightbreed*. Out now from BOOM! Studios, *Nightbreed* #1 tells an original tale, taking inspiration from both the film and the short story upon which it was based. Promising to fill in vital backstory, it's been a long time coming. Not seventy-five years, but a long time all the same.

Joel Harley can be contacted at: joel.harley@starburstmagazine.com and tweeted @joelharley



REVIEWS

THE LATEST
COMIC BOOK
RELEASES REVIEWED
AND RATED



STAR WARS: DARTH VADER AND THE CRY OF SHADOWS

WRITER: TIM SIEDELL / ARTIST: GABRIEL GUZMAN, MICHAEL ATIYEH, FELIPE MASSAFERA / PUBLISHER: DARK HORSE / RELEASE DATE: JULY 15TH

Darth Vader and the Cry of Shadows is told from the perspective of Hock, a clone trooper who possesses enough self-awareness and willpower to make himself unique amongst his brethren; quite an impressive feat for one clone amongst many. Lord Vader's name may be on the title, but this is mostly Hock's story.

Hock bears a grudge against the Jedi and, though the Clone Wars are over, he joins up as a Storm Trooper in order to assist in rooting out the rebels. Hock's opinion of his fellow Storm Troopers (who are not all clones) is wry and clever and it leaves the reader wanting to see more Storm Trooper action. Sadly

the character isn't given much of an opportunity to grow, making it hard to empathise with him. Different from all the other clones he may be, but he is still very much a blank slate. What makes this frustrating is that his adventures see him meet all sorts of interesting rebels, but he does not hang around long enough for the reader to get to know any of them.

Darth Vader himself is presented as a brooding menace. Siedell clearly understands that less is more when it comes to this particular Sith Lord and has done much to repair the damage caused by the prequels to this villain's scary rep. Vader spends most of his time during the story saying very little and acting both brutally and swiftly which are the traits that made us like the character in the first place.

The art is appropriately cinematic, as you would expect from a Star Wars book and looks very nice. Vader is especially menacing and the scenes that riff on the idea that Hock is a clone work well and are visually striking. It's simply a pity that the pace is too fast and the characterisation too light. As a result, Darth Vader and the Cry of Shadows does not stand out from the plethora of other Star Wars stories out there, though Vader fans will get a kick out of their hero being the badass monster he's meant to be.

ED FORTUNE

★★★★★+ 6





CODENAME: ACTION VOLUME 1

AUTHOR: CHRIS ROBERSON / ARTISTS:
JONATHAN LAU / PUBLISHER: DYNAMITE /
RELEASE DATE: JULY 1ST

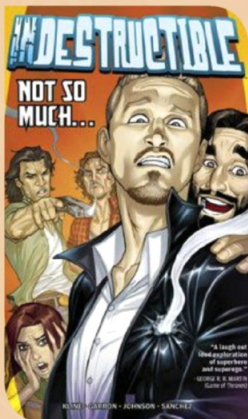
Nostalgia fuelled spin-off media based on popular toys are a mainstay of the comic book industry, and there is quite a demand for them. One of the more unusual recent toy tie-ins have been books based on the 1966 action figure Captain Action. In case you're unfamiliar with the doll, Captain Action was an Action Man-style dress-up doll who came with a variety of outfits allowing him to become other heroes. Examples included The Lone Ranger, The Phantom and The Green Hornet. Codename: Action is an attempt to give this manikin an origin story. The result is a comic book that feels as if it was scripted by throwing a lot of action figures at some enthusiastic kids and watching them play for a few hours. It's a jumble of ideas; mostly spy-fi high-tech adventure, but with its fair share of alien conspiracy, two-fisted justice and superhero action. It riffs on all sorts of fun cult TV shows and movies including The Man From U.N.C.L.E. and anything Gerry Anderson ever made.

The plot involves world leaders behaving strangely and the Cold War hotting up. You could argue that this is a cliché, but Codename: Action just about gets away with making it feel more like a

classic storyline, rather than old hat.

Jonathan Lau's art adds to the retro feel. The older, wiser secret agent is drawn to look almost (but not quite) like Sean Connery, the foxy female agent is a nice blend of female action heroes from the '60s and even the mad scientists look iconic and appropriately in period. The background art is also a clever blend of various movie and TV sets and, though the art style is modern, it almost looks like it's something from over 50 years ago. Those familiar with the Captain Action toys will notice that various brand elements are loud and proud, but the rest of us will be able to enjoy it as pure pulp silliness.

ED FORTUNE



INDESTRUCTIBLE VOLUME 1

AUTHOR: JEFF KLINE / ARTISTS: JAVI GARRON,
SALVI GARCIA, ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ /
PUBLISHER: IDW / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 24TH

Comic books have an image problem when it comes to comedy, the general public tends to assume that if the characters in a graphic novel are drawn in a serious, realistic manner then the book is going to be serious or at least not deliberately funny. The multiple meanings of the word comic means that a sit-com style work can be a tricky thing to pitch. Yet it hasn't stopped people from trying and, in the case of Indestructible, pulling it off to great effect.

Indestructible is a situation comedy adventure set in a world full of superheroes. When a chap called Greg Pincus foils an armed robbery by getting in the way of a bullet and surviving, everyone assumes he is immune to bullets and an unlikely series of events are triggered that will either make Greg famous, or a corpse.

This is a classic mistaken identity farce of the sort that Hollywood loves to make and remake again and again. All the necessary tropes are here: the over-enthusiastic best friend, the beautiful but dangerous woman, the lovely and approachable girl and the life-changing offer that's too good to be true. Throw in a wacky family and the result is a story with very few surprises. This doesn't really matter however; the story is well told, the set-ups and their inevitable gags are funny.

Javi Garron's art does

its best to look cinematic and serious, though it doesn't leave all the gags to the script; almost every character seems to be gurning in a hilarious manner at some point during the tale and though this does seem to fit the story quite well it does get old quite quickly. In addition there isn't a single female character who isn't either blessed with an amazing figure or at the very least wearing a good push-up bra which is also a bit dull. Still, the art is clear and solid, and Garron conveys both comedy and action very well. Over all, Indestructible Volume 1 is a good start to what we hope will be an amusing series.

ED FORTUNE





Grant Kempster & Dan Schaefer

insomniac **part 3**

But it might
already be
too late.

God. No.

The other
driver... it
was Rachel.

And the
passenger..

...her daughter.

I'm terribly
sorry Mrs Moenic.
We've done everything
we can, there's just
too much damage.

We need to
consider turning
off life support.

Later.

Rachel.
I'm so sorry.
It wasn't
my fault...

it's
taken your
daughter.

this
'thing' keeps
happening
and now...

It's taken
MY daughter?
MY DAUGHTER?!

For Christ's
sake Ian, accept some
responsibility for
once in your life!

Wait...

Mine?

She's
mine?

Daddy?

And I have
to save her.

I didn't think
you were going
to wake up
this time.

It's okay. I'm
awake now.

My God. Save
her from what?

TO BE CONTINUED...

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PIXEL JUICE

VIDEO GAMING
NEWS & PREVIEWS
BY LEE PRICE



Take-Two CEO Discusses New RED DEAD and BIOSHOCK Titles

Over the course of the last couple of months we have made mention of there likely being plans for new **Red Dead** and **BioShock** games. Now, while he stopped a little short of actually announcing the games outright, Take-Two CEO Strauss Zelnick has confirmed that **Red Dead** is considered a "permanent franchise" by the company and that the **BioShock** series is now in the hands of 2K Marin for the foreseeable future, suggesting that work on a new title is already underway.

New **BioShock** is hardly a surprise. Praise was heaped on the last title by all and sundry and rightfully so. Even without Ken Levine at the helm you

should expect something decent to come out of the next game. **Red Dead**, for us at least, is perhaps the more exciting news. **Redemption** took a cowboy genre that has rarely delivered on the big systems and created one of the most bittersweet and beautiful games of the last generation. There needs to be another so it's damned fine news that Take-Two consider the franchise on the same level as the **GTA** games.

Zelnick also had some choice words about quality versus quantity when it comes to the release schedule, stating "The risk of just [releasing more games] is that you end up just bulking up your release schedule and that isn't really what consumers want. Consumers want better, not more." Here's hoping Activision and Ubisoft take that advice to heart. Activision especially as the **CoD** series is in serious danger of burnout right about now.

COMING SOON



SCOOBY DOO AND LOONEY TOONS CARTOON UNIVERSE: ADVENTURE

PLATFORM: 3DS
RELEASE DATE: JULY 23RD

There is very little information about this title, which is rather surprising considering the calibre of the licenses associated with it. Described as a family friendly action-adventure game, we can only hope that the quality of the title hits the heights of the superb Looney Tunes games that were developed by Konami for the Megadrive back in the day. Look for cartoon capers and fairly simplistic gameplay, but it may be fun for fans.

MOTAL COMBAT X

Mortal Kombat is one of the great comeback stories in recent gaming history. After a string of poor performances once it made the transition into 3D, the **MK** series seemed to be going the way of the Dodo, much like the fighting genre as a whole.

Then **Street Fighter IV** came along and showed that there was a way back for older fighting series that hadn't really set the world on fire. We all expected **SFIV** to be great though. **Mortal Kombat 9**, on the other hand, had every chance to be absolute shite.

It wasn't. Granted the frustrating A.I. that fans had developed a love/hate relationship with since the first game was released was still there. However it was a game that was clearly crafted with love for the source material and is still well worth a play.

That's why it's such good news that a sequel has now been announced. The trailer looks damned cool, featuring Sub-Zero getting his arse handed to him by Scorpion, and you can bet the new-generation consoles are surely going to be home to so much bloodshed that the makers of **Saw** will throw fits of jealous rage.

COMING SOON

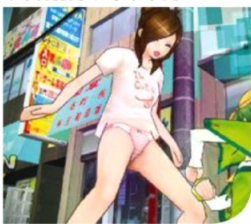


SACRED 3

PLATFORM: PS3, 360, PC
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 5TH

The **Sacred** series has always been pretty decent without ever really making any big waves. The third in the action-RPG series will see the introduction of a host of new classes as the player battles to defeat the ruler of the Ashen Empire. Four-player co-op will be featured throughout the entire thing, with A.I. allies subbing in for real people if the game is played offline. That may be a slight stumbling block for some so here's hoping Deep Silver have got the A.I. right.

COMING SOON

AKIBA'S TRIP:
UNDEAD & UNDERESSED

PLATFORM: PS3, VITA
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 6TH

This is the sort of game that could only come out of the Japan. The fact that it is even getting released over here at all is a surprise. The basic plotline sees demons taking over the town of Akihabara, with the only way to defeat them being to strip their clothes off and expose them to sunlight. This, of course, provides plenty of scope for lots of scantily clad men and women, but the player is also able to visit over 130 real-life shops. Should be fun and a little bit different.

MARIO KART 8 Actually
Sells Well...

Nintendo fans rejoice...or at least try to raise a smile. There is finally a semi-successful Wii-U game. **Mario Kart 8** has managed to shift 1.2 million copies during its first week of sale, making it the fastest selling Wii-U game in history. Nintendo fans will be hoping those sales continue into the long-term and the series is one of the few that could genuinely be considered a console seller.

The **Mario Kart** series is one of the few that can actually lend a little bit of credibility to Nintendo's ailing console and, while it may only be a short term fix to Ninty's long term problems, it's at least something for owners of the console to enjoy until the new **Smash Bros.** turns up. Well that and the Luigi's Death Star subredit dealie that is currently doing the rounds.

COMING SOON

STAR WARS: ATTACK
SQUADRONS Cancelled

Area 52 have announced the cancellation of **Star Wars: Attack Squadrons**. The game, which was going to be free-to-play and would allow up to sixteen people to engage in dogfights using some of the famous spacecrafts from the series. It was most likely going to be very cool. We can't be having that now can we.

A statement from the studio said "After much consideration, we have decided to cease development so that we can focus on other **Star Wars** game experiences. We truly appreciate the time you spent enjoying in the beta."

You have to wonder what "other **Star Wars** game experiences" will mean. My guess is that it will be the same game but with more polish and a hefty price tag attached to it.

ASSASSIN'S CREED Will
Continue to See Release on
Previous Gen Consoles

Following Ubisoft's announcement that **Assassin's Creed: Unity** will be a new-gen release only, many gamers were a little worried that they wouldn't be able to play the same game with a different title and setting again without upgrading.

Those fans of the series can celebrate as Ubisoft company chief Yves

Guillemot has announced that the series will continue to see separate release on the 360 and PS3.

Guillemot said "**Assassin's Creed: Unity** will be another major entry in the franchise's history. The game will showcase the city of Paris with amazing next-gen graphics and will incorporate great new innovations that will be revealed at E3. The title will be released this fall on Xbox One, PS4 and PC. We have not disclosed our plan yet for the Xbox 360 and PS3 SKUs, however we have made it clear as a company that we will expect to continue supporting both consoles for the foreseeable future."

Now while supporting the consoles is a bit vague, there are currently rumours doing the rounds that a game codenamed **Assassin's Creed: Comet** is currently being worked on. I'm sure there are plenty of people delighted that decent ideas will continue to be run into the ground until nobody cares anymore.

HALO 5 Announced

Talking about running things into the ground, the **Halo** trilogy is going to get it's fifth entry on the Xbox One. Now I will grant that **Halo Reach** was a superb slice of gaming, offering the best story of any title in the series for my money. **Halo 4**... wasn't - and the anniversary edition of the original **Halo** was utterly pointless in my view.

Still, **Halo** is one of Microsoft's Killer Apps and you have to imagine that 343 Industries will have something up their sleeves for its introduction into the new generation.

Unsurprisingly, the release of the new title, which will be subtitled 'Guardians' will coincide with the TV series because if you're going to saturate the market you should make sure you overexpose your product as quickly as possible.

Still, I would expect this to sell like hot cakes until the Xbox One builds up a decent library of original titles and, in all fairness, you can't really go wrong with a bit of multiplayer **Halo**.

DISGAEA 4:
A PROMISE REVISITED
PLATFORM: VITA
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 12TH

The Disgaea series has always been one of those that has combined critical acclaim with a dedicated fan-following only to not ever break into mainstream acceptance. A Promise Unforgotten was yet another in the series that delivered enormously but didn't achieve the success it deserved. This Vita port of the PS3 game will feature all of the original game's DLC in addition to some new areas for returning fans.



WATCH_DOGS Breaks Sales Records in the U.K

There is no denying that **WATCH_DOGS** has been a runaway success story. One of the most hyped games of the year appears to have actually lived up in the billing, shifting more than 4 million copies during its first weekend of sales.

Nowhere is that more apparent than in the UK where the game has become the fastest selling new IP ever, breaking the record that was previously held by the superb **L.A. Noire**.

We can debate which is the better game until the cows come home but I'm just happy that a new IP is actually breaking into the market, especially considering that damned near every item in the column this week has been about the continuation of an existing series or saga.

COMING SOON



WASTELAND 2

PLATFORM: PC, MAC

RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 2014

How rare is it to have a decent prospect scheduled for release on the Mac? The original *Wasteland* was considered to be a big inspiration for *Fallout* so hopes are high that this post-apocalyptic RPG will be able to deliver the goods. This is yet another game that has been part-funded by the Kickstarter platform, taking just 43 hours to reach its \$1 million target, so anticipation will be high for those who contributed. We get the feeling that this will be worth a look.

COMING SOON



THE WALKING DEAD: GAME OF THE YEAR EDITION

PLATFORM: XBOX ONE, PS4

RELEASE DATE: JULY 29TH

*This one is already out on the trusty PS3 and 360 and frankly you can't really go wrong with Telltale's superb *Walking Dead* adventure series. This will feature all of the episodes from the first season plus special bonus episode *400 Days*. If you haven't experienced these games yet, we thoroughly recommend it. They are superbly written and a hell of a lot of fun to play, making them as superb complement to the TV series.*

ARKHAM KNIGHT Delayed Until 2015

Batman fans will have to wait a little bit longer to see the Caped Crusader make his debut on the new generation of consoles as Rocksteady have announced that the upcoming *Arkham Knight* is going to be delayed until next year.

A statement from the developed said, "We just want to make the best experience we possibly can and we need more time to do that. I think what we've shown so far is a super-ambitious project and we just want

to make sure we are giving Batman fans and gamers the best Batman experience that we can possibly deliver and that just takes time. I think we would be doing fans a disservice if we didn't spend the time on the title."

Now while it's never nice to have to wait a little longer for something you're anticipating, making sure that the game is as good as it deserves to be is always a good reason, plus it suggests that they will be doing something interesting with it rather than rehashing the same ideas. Every. Single. Year.



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REVIEWS

STARBURST PLUGS IN
AND PLAYS
THE MONTH'S
BIGGEST RELEASES



WATCH DOGS

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL / PUBLISHER: UBISOFT PLATFORMS: PC, PS3, PS4, XBOX 360, XBOX ONE, Wii U / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

After repeated delays, to the frustration of console owners and manufacturers alike, *WATCH DOGS* has finally arrived. Set on the streets of an alternate Chicago, *WATCH DOGS*' premise is very much a Grand Theft Auto-style excuse to leave a path of destruction across an open world. Months after his actions against another hacker inadvertently led to the death of his niece, Aiden Pearce is out for revenge. Determined to hunt down the true culprits, Aiden will fight through whoever is in his path to bring them to justice.

This quest for justice takes place in a free-roaming world filled with police, gangs and guns - all with the bonus of hacking any ATM machine you want and even being

able to arm the enemies' grenades (whilst still attached to them!). With Aiden unable to take the same punishment as characters in the *GTA* or *Saints Row* series, combat is far more methodical, and even vehicular rampages allow for far more control over the environment, helping *WATCH DOGS* stand out from the crowd. The option to hack traffic lights alone is a godsend for anyone with a high wanted rating.

Even ignoring that main gimmick, the game still stands up well with fantastic cover-based shooting and a level of detail which brings the city to life - even whilst employing the graphical downgrade the game still looks fantastic. Unfortunately, the enemy AI rarely fails to present a

challenge far above the cannon-fodder law-enforcers of other open world series.

The game suffers from other problems despite these good elements. Along with police forces running to assist heavily armed gangs fighting Aiden, immersion-breaking elements involve *WATCH DOGS*' attempts to present Aiden's crimes as heroic. In an effort to avoid presenting him as a criminal, acts such as stealing from charity workers and other abhorrent behaviour are dressed up as justice. It's very off-putting, even more so than playing as a true villain in any title.

Even accepting this, the game is hamstrung by an astoundingly close pop-in distance. Not only is it very distracting to have buildings suddenly teleporting into existence only a short distance away, but this can easily lead to you ruining your reputation within the game. After all, accidentally running over civilians by the dozen during a high speed chase would be enough to turn public opinion against anyone...

WATCH DOGS certainly has a few problems, but it's a solid release nonetheless. If you're after an outstanding open world experience and *GTA 5* failed to interest you, give this one a look.

CALLUM SHEPHERD



STARBURST

★★★★★★★★★★ 7



WOLFENSTEIN: THE NEW ORDER

DEVELOPER: MACHINEGAMES / PUBLISHER: BETHESDA SOFTWORKS / PLATFORM: PC, PS3, PS4, XBOX 360, XBOX ONE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Serving as a soft reboot for the series following the commercial failure of Raven Software's 2009 release, *Wolfenstein: The New Order* puts a new spin on things. Sergeant William Joseph Blazkowicz finds himself in a nightmare 1960s where the Axis forces have total control over the world. Eventually making contact with the resistance, he sets out on an impossible do-or-die mission to find a way to break the regime's hold on Europe, and perhaps even turn their own weapons against them.

A schlocky setting to be sure, the basic story reflects the mechanics involved. Breaking away from the usual modern military shooter format, *The New Order* opts instead to integrate run-and-gun ideas from the classic era of first-person shooters. Along with being able to dual-wield just about everything but turret weapons, Blazkowicz can soak up enough ammo to equip a small regiment. This is in part thanks to a semi-regenerating health system akin to *Resistance: Fall of Man*, but also the welcome return of an overcharge system to the modern era of video games. You can briefly go over the maximum health limit only for it to drop a point every second until it is back to normal. Were this not enough, the game encourages exploration of its wide levels with hidden secrets and branching gameplay paths which offer fantastic replay values.

The enemies themselves also offer an exciting variety of foes to fill with bullets, from stomping mechs to the more common goose-stepping stormtroopers. While many can be fought in the open, MachineGames have

thankfully opted to give some variety with a perks system and rewards for the occasional stealth takedown. While it might be a throwback to classic shooters, at the same time it is not entirely ignoring the developments of modern gaming.

The only real misstep with the game comes with its tone. With an utterly insane plot, and a villain worthy of Tarantino, *The New Order* does unfortunately take itself a little too seriously more than once. While it is all well executed, it is hard to go from mowing down small armies of foes to seeing the horror of the ongoing genocide of indigenous peoples and

"subhuman" patients being forcefully taken from doctors. It instead feels like a game of two halves, neither of which fully match up with one another, leaving it with something of an identity crisis.

Despite this problem, whether or not *Wolfenstein: The New Order* is a game for you can be decided by one simple question: do you like fighting undead cyborg Nazis armed with Tesla coils with more firepower than God Himself? If the answer is yes, then you needn't hesitate.

CALLUM SHEPARD

+++++ 7



STARBURST

RETRO BYTES

A LOOK BACK AT
THE WORLD OF
RETRO GAMING
BY CHRIS JACKSON



SIZE DOESN'T MATTER

Once upon a time, a little company called Nintendo found success with their home console, the Nintendo Entertainment System. Before that happened though, they needed something big to provide them with enough funds to truly make themselves a household name. So what did they do? Realising just how much the public had taken to gaming, with Atari's *Asteroids* in particular doing huge business in arcades during the late 1970s, Nintendo had the bright idea of making games truly portable for the first time ever. The first entries in the Game & Watch series made their way onto shelves in 1980, and handheld gaming was off to a flying start.

Over 50 different Game & Watch titles were released over the following decade. Some were more successful than others, but overall it was the first line of products that really turned Nintendo into a recognised brand. Their reputation as leaders of innovation in the gaming world was cemented with the release of the Nintendo

Entertainment System in the mid-'80s, but the company wasn't content with just lying around and watching the money roll in. There were many massively successful titles on the NES, but what if people were able to actually take their games with them if they went on holiday or round to their grandma's for the afternoon? The designers of the old Game & Watch series got to work once again, and in 1990, the Game Boy was revealed to a ravenously appreciative public. It's only taken us two paragraphs but we finally got the intro out of the way!

Where the Game & Watch titles were self-contained with a single game pre-installed on each unit, the Game Boy utilised cartridges (similar to a small version of those used on the NES) to blow its potential library wide open. Handheld games were no longer restricted to one lonely screen or a single set of controls/actions - the designers found a way to bring the now-familiar NES controls to the

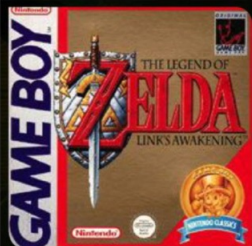
new portable system, including the directional D-pad which had originally been created for the *Donkey Kong* Game & Watch title. Thanks to the use of cartridges to store the games, it was now possible for developers to include entire levels as well as music and sound effects in their games. It might not sound like much, but it was a real eye-opener when you'd previously got your portable gaming fix from making a clown juggle balls by pressing left and right set to a soundtrack of nothing more than a few bleeps and squelchy noises when you messed up. To put it simply, the Game Boy and its muddy yellow 2.5 inch screen with a tiny four-colour palette might not look like much to kids of today, but back then it was absolutely astonishing.

There was, of course, plenty of competition from a variety of pretenders to Nintendo's portable gaming throne. Atari gave us the Lynx with its full-colour 16 bit graphics and unique multiplayer cable arrangement, Sega's Game Gear aimed to capitalise on the company's previous success by allowing Master System games to be played on their new handheld, and there was even a TurboGrafx-16/PC Engine portable known as the TurboExpress.

The Game Boy triumphed over all comers however, largely thanks to the public's familiarity with Nintendo's back catalogue. It helped that most of their competitors had some pretty major faults - horrendous battery issues, bad marketing, lack of developer support (seriously, how many versions of *Pac Man* and *Paperboy* did games companies think people needed?) and high price tags all contributed to the Game Boy's dominance of the handheld market.

But what about the games? Well, there were some absolute blinders released over the years. Pretty much everyone's





first Game Boy title was *Tetris*, due to it being included as a pack-in title with every Game Boy sold. There's definitely a discussion to be had revolving around whether the Game Boy sold so well because of *Tetris* or if *Tetris* was so successful because so many people owned a Game Boy, but it really is a chicken/egg-type question and we'd be here for weeks if we tried to answer it here. Either way, as one of the most well-known games of all time it can't have hurt Nintendo's fortunes to have it for sale exclusively on their own system.

We've already mentioned how the promise of being able to play Nintendo's most successful franchises "on the go" helped to make the Game Boy a must-have item, but these were no half-baked handheld conversions of previously existing titles. Game Boy owners had access to entirely new games featuring Nintendo's star names such as *Mario*, *The Legend of Zelda*, *Donkey Kong*, *Kirby*, and *Mega Man* (although admittedly he ended up on other consoles after a while). It's true that none of these games were as pretty and colourful as their NES counterparts, but the lure of taking these characters out of the house and playing with them in the park was ultimately what pulled people towards the Game Boy.

We haven't quite got time for a top 10 must-play Game Boy titles, but here's a few recommendations for anyone looking to get started.

The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening. The fourth instalment in the *Zelda* franchise was the first to be released on a handheld, and also marked a bit of a departure for the series as it was the first to be set outside the



kingdom of Hyrule. It didn't feature *Zelda* or the Triforce either, instead focusing on the giant sleeping "Wind Fish" and Link's quest to find a set of musical instruments which would wake the fish and send Link home from the island he was trapped on. Starting life as a straightforward port of the Super Nintendo's *A Link to the Past*, *Link's Awakening* quickly became a whole new beast and is easily up there with the best *Zelda* titles.

Operation C (AKA *Probotector*). Again, the first handheld appearance for an already popular franchise, this time it's the turn of the unflinchingly difficult one-hit-and-you're-dead *Contra* franchise. Featuring incredibly smooth gameplay and enemies darting around the screen in every direction possible, it maybe isn't one for the faint of heart but the combination of fast-paced side-scrolling shooting and relentless top-down combat is pretty difficult to resist once you get going.

And just because we always like to throw a forgotten treat into the mix wherever possible, we'll recommend *Hammerin' Harry: Ghost Building Company*. After starring in several home console games, Harry turns his hand to monster hunting - this platforming adventure takes him through haunted houses, huge airships and overgrown jungles, using his hammer to bash the brains out of legions of the undead. He was big in Japan, you know.

A few other top tips if you fancy an afternoon of monochrome fun - fruit-grabbing bell-ringing platformer *Super Hunchback* (definitely not to be confused with Disney's *Hunchback Of Notre Dame...*), jellybean-guzzling shapeshifting puzzle platformer *A*



Boy And His Blob, easy-but-awesome movie tie-in *Beetlejuice*, or if you're into puzzle games, you can't really go wrong with shades-wearing armless tomatos with legs *Kwirk* (or ridiculous potato in *Amazing Tater*, depending on which part of the world you live in).

Even though there was a huge amount of worthwhile titles on the Game Boy, there were also a fair few stinkers - the "avoid at all cost" list definitely includes any of the *Castlevania* series, unless you like super-slow games that feel like you're steering your character through mud. *Mortal Kombat* made three appearances but each one was progressively worse than the last due to the developer's insistence on attempting to fix previous games' problems while still trying to add more elements that would supposedly make the next instalment more enjoyable.

On top of the huge selection of games, there was also a wide variety of accessories and peripherals that made the Game Boy more appealing than its competitors. A camera and printer were released in 1998 (well into the N64 years when you would probably have expected the Game Boy to have long fallen by the wayside), a "Transfer Pak" allowed gamers to transfer their saved games and characters between the Game Boy and N64 (but was sadly under-utilised), and link cables opened up the Game Boy to multiplayer gaming.

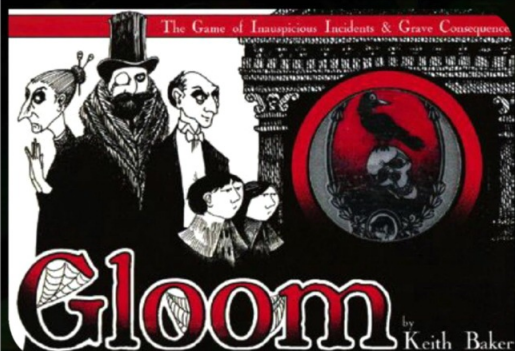
Then there were the unofficial additions - there was a magnifying glass that clipped over the top of the Game Boy, a light so you could play undercover long into the night after mum had tucked you into bed and put the lights out, speakers that plugged into the headphone socket to annoy everyone in the room... And let's not forget the Super Game Boy - an adapter that allowed Game Boy cartridges to be used on the Super Nintendo. It really was a whole world of amazing inventions that had never really been seen before.

We're running low on space to go on any more, but we'll come back to this at some point and have a look at what happened after the Game Boy was discontinued. Plenty of fun stuff to talk about with the Game Boy Colour and Game Boy Advance, so that'll be something for you to look forward to! +



ROLL FOR DAMAGE

ED FORTUNE
GUIDES YOU
THROUGH THE
REALM OF
TABLETOP GAMING



The best sort of traditional games have a narrative. Chess is an abstract expression of a war between royal families. *Monopoly* tells the story of greedy landowners through the medium of people who don't have decent taste in boardgames. Whereas the bulk of 'Eurogames' have mostly concentrated on nifty and elegant mechanics (and by Euro we mostly mean German), the British and the Americans have been far more interested in telling tall tales through card and boardgames. Britain's contribution to this fine tradition is either tall-tale telling game *The Extraordinary Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (which is the finest excuse for a piss-up ever brought to a tabletop) or *Mornington Crescent*, the rules of which we'll explain in another column. The Americans however, have trumped the UK with their dark, dank and deliciously miserable little card game, *Gloom*, by Atlas Games.

Gloom is a game sharply inspired by the likes of Poe, Tim Burton and Edward Gorey. The aim of the game is simple: each player has a number of cards representing a specific type of family and the aim of the game is to kill these people off in the most dramatic and interesting way possible. The main set comes with four families for you to happily do away with. They are defined by where they are from - the cold and ancient Castle Slogar gives us a family of demented nobles who are a little bit too fascinated with death; the cards include a clueless lord, a crazy lady scientist and a monstrous teddy bear. Meanwhile, in Hemlock Hall, we have a pair of evil twins, a doting and grief stricken lord, a profoundly

plotting daughter and a butler who almost certainly did it. The family at Blackwater Watch features The Old Man (who ain't what it used to be) and her family of merry murders, including a maleficent mutt. Finally we have Dark's Den of Deformity, a travelling circus of failed freaks, including The Bearded Man and deeply creepy clown.

As you can tell, these cards are detailed just lightly enough in such a way to give even the most unimaginative person the material to hang a story on. The mechanics are very easy to grasp. You play negative cards on your own family, whilst explaining the source of the tragedy. For example, you may have two cards, one called 'Swindled by Salesmen' and the other 'Suffered from Sores'. You play these on one of your family cards, whilst telling the tale of a snakeoil salesman who sold beauty cream to the Old Man. As the game progresses you expand on this tale of woe. Once you've got a low enough score you play an appropriate death card, weaving a tragic tale as you do. The cards themselves are transparent, making it easy to stack them on top of each other and still see what's going on.

If you ignore the narrative elements, *Gloom* plays pretty quickly, but you will have also missed the point entirely. The aim is not to win (though it's always nice), it's to tell the best story you can with the cards in your hand. You can also play cards on other players, meaning that each player has to constantly re-adjust their own ideas as to where each story is going. The game's mechanics encourage long and interesting narratives; themes stack up so if you keep

playing drink related cards on just the one person you're likely to get a higher score.

Gloom is wildly popular. It's a simple enough game that appeals to the darker side of ourselves without being depressingly grim. As a result, it's generated a good number of expansions.

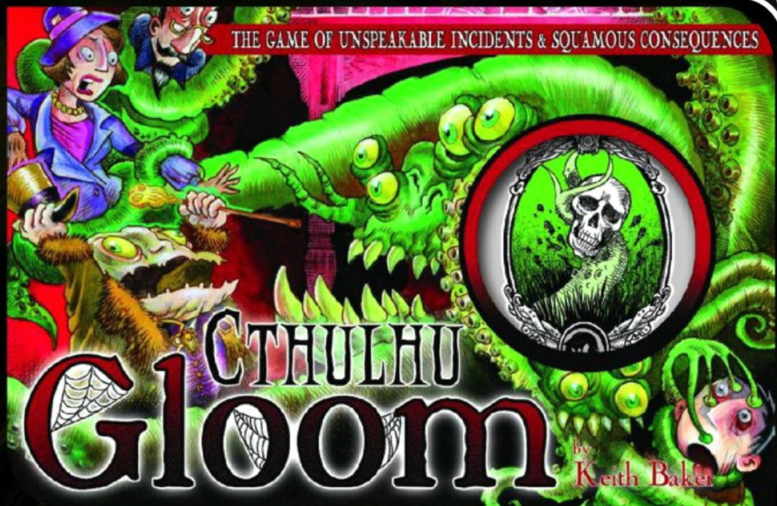
Gloom: Unhappy Homes adds an additional family to the game (expanding it to a five player game). The artists of Le Canard Noir are entirely incompetent; consumptive courtesans caper with painfully penniless poets and messily misunderstood models. The set also introduces residences, the idea here is that each family has its own haunted house which has its own story. The more cards you put on a place, the deeper the tale of horror and woe it acquires and the better the score. This element allows stronger storytelling, wrapping the stories up into one central location.

The next set, *Gloom: Unwelcome Guests* follows on from *Unhappy Homes*. We get perhaps my favourite family, the goonish gangsters known as the Malone Mob, malodorous murders each and every single one. In addition we get a new residence, The Broken Arms Hotel. It also introduces a mechanic familiar to players of *Chez Geek*, guests. These character cards flit from family to family, following tragedy after tragedy. Sometimes they're good things to have, most often they're a random factor that demands even quicker thinking.

Unfortunate Expeditions adds an additional family, the Bumbersnoots. As you may expect, they are nicely done parodies of both *Tarzan* and the entire 'white explorer' genre, and includes a savage jungle lass and a sinister simian. In addition to their very own treehouse, the game adds the idea of expeditions, which are very similar to residences. *Unquiet Dead* also features a similar mechanic: stories, specifically camp-side style ghost stories. *Unquiet Dead* includes mechanics to make family members undead, which given that this is a game of sad demises isn't always a good thing.

Much like ubiquitous card game *Munchkin*, it's important to be mindful of all these expansions. It's very easy to overload your set with too many rules, making it less easy (and less fun) to play. Speaking of *Munchkin*, one of the strangest accessories has to be the 'Duck of Gloom'. This requires a spot of explanation. *Munchkin* features a card called 'The Duck of Gloom', with the tag line that one should never pick up a duck in a dungeon. As a joke (and also because Steve Jackson Games loves to cash in) a plush toy duck went on sale. Not only is it

THE GAME OF UNSPEAKABLE INCIDENTS & SQUAMOUS CONSEQUENCES



very cute, it also doubles as a purse thanks to a zipper in its belly and comes with some exclusive duck-themed cards for *Munchkin*. This lovely looking yellow duck has a gloomy companion, The Duck of Gloom. It's the exact same gimmick, except it's black in colour. Slit this duck's zippered belly open and you get two cards: The Duck of Gloom (a curse for *Munchkin*) and a special Gloom card, Sir Neville Duckworthy The Original Munchkin. Sir Neville is a terrible burden. He turns up uninvited and makes your family members much more likely to die a devilish death due to ducks. The plush toys

are seriously cute and can be just about balanced on one's head, if you're so inclined (and have decent balance or a flat head).

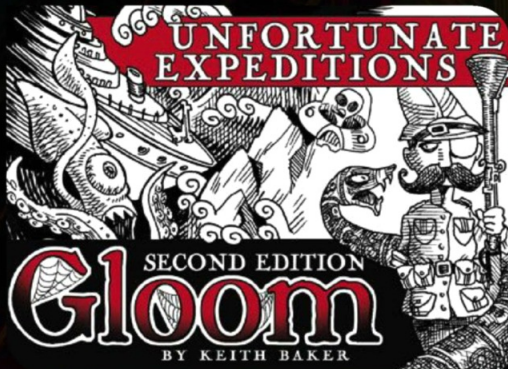
The rarest expansion is the *TableTop Promo Expansion*. Strictly limited, it came out as a free promo for 2013's International Table Top Day. They are inspired by YouTube show *TableTop* and feature two new unwelcome guests, geek goddess Felicia Day and *Star Trek* exile Wil Wheaton. The cards don't really make that much sense unless you've seen the show, but if you have they're quite apt.

One of the ways you can tell that

Gloom is so popular is that there is an inevitable Cthulhu themed set. *Cthulhu Gloom* is a stand-alone set, meaning you don't need the rest of the gubbins to play. It introduces four new families, all of whom are appropriate to the myths. Fans of H.P. Lovecraft's work will recognise the names of Dunwich, Innsmouth, Miskatonic University and of course, the Charles Dexter Ward of Arkham Sanitarium. Some of the pictures are delightfully goofy, the Herbert West illustration owes more to the movie *Re-Animator* than the original short story, for example. Special rules have been added to this set so players can heed the *Call of Cthulhu* or slowly become a Deep One as they stumble across something fishy. It has its own expansion, *Unpleasant Dreams*, essentially a more squamous version of *Unwelcome Guests*. Gameplay is even more in-jokey than the core version of *Gloom*, it really helps if you know your Abboth from your Azathoth here, simply so you can tell more horrible tales. At the time of writing, no plush Cthulhu has been made to accompany this variant of the game. Give it time.

As you may be able to tell, the range of variants for *Gloom* are close to overwhelming; such is the industry that games makers will happily churn out expansions. It doesn't really matter, the core version of the game (or its tentacle obsessed brother) is a must-have addition to any gaming collection. Get it, or be devoured by ducks.

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STARBURST: EVENT PROFILE

MCM LONDON COMIC CON

WORDS: ANDREW KEATES
PHOTOS: MCMEXPO



Whoever came up with the phrase, 'size doesn't matter' might have reconsidered their view, if they had been lucky enough to attend the MCM London Comic Con at ExCel London this May.

What struck me first of all was the sheer volume of those in attendance, which I would later learn would total over one hundred thousand attendees. You couldn't move for fans seeking out long-lost action figures, hard to find trading cards and exhibiting the finest costumes I've ever seen at a convention. This is the daddy of all conventions and it was a privilege to attend both days.

ExCel is an enormous collection of huge rooms, which were clearly defined with the aid of a map of different zones. Essentially it's a bit like if Disneyland ran a convention. And if you get lost, there's always a helpful host of MCM staff. The

most prominent of these zones has to be the memorabilia section. In short, if you can think of it, you can buy it. I have never seen a larger collection of dealers of every type of merchandise. From sci-fi to Manga, Anime to horror, props to swords, trading cards to cakes. It really does have everything you could possibly imagine.

A great feature was the Games Expo. In many ways, this area alone could have kept most entertained all by itself, offering gamers the chance to try-out the latest releases and even future releases from the likes of Capcom, Nintendo, Tecmo Koei, Bandai Namco, Square Enix, Jaded, Reef Entertainment, Warner Bros and so many others, with superb immersive installations and a great opportunity to talk to the games makers and even watch very informative panel discussions too. But, my favourite feature was the new

Indie Games section, a special area for MCM to showcase the latest games from the independent market.

A very impressive location was the Comic Village, which offered the largest coming together of comic creators. I'm no expert in comic books, but it really was a superb coming together of those passionate about sequential art. From dealers working with amateur artists on the latest drawing tablets to well established artists sat doodling with their fans.

A unique zone was the Anime, Cosplay and Asian Culture section. Which included directors, producers, voiceover artists and leading distributors of Anime (including Manga, MVM Entertainment and Anime Ltd) – who all offered on-stage panels and gladly met anyone who would like to chat about these vibrant art forms. I thought it was particularly inspired to include a PopAsia zone, which offered delicious food, stunning art, clothing and make-up of Asia. MCM also hosted the Cosplay Masquerade as well as the qualifiers of the EuroCosplay Championships, Europe's biggest Cosplay competition.

As you would expect from any event by MCM, their London Comic Con featured an eclectic mix of guests, who were signing autographs and offering the opportunity to have their photos taken, including Orphan Black star Dylan Bruce, Game of Thrones cast members, James Cosmo, Julian Glover and Josef Altin, Henry 'The Fonz' Winkler, iconic Red Dwarf cast member, Robert Llewellyn, the cast and crew of the brand new live action series, Street Fighter – Assassins Fist, Tamara Taylor, best known for her role as Dr Camille Saroyan in Bones and a whole host of others. What's great about this, and indeed every MCM event, is the appreciation of all guests in cult entertainment throughout the years, rather than just bookending obvious favourites or obscure new actors.

This paragraph must be dedicated to apologising to you, the reader, and that's because this review cannot do MCM London justice, because there was simply too much to do/see/buy/watch/play/discuss to include it all in this one review. However, I must make it clear that MCM London is a must-attend event. I cannot see how it could possibly get bigger; however, with Bryan Cooney at the helm, you know that somehow he'll find a way to ensure that it does.

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT FUTURE MCM EXPO EVENTS VISIT:

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INTERVIEW: ROBERT LLEWELLYN

WORDS: ANDREW KEATES

Whilst at MCM London Comic Con, STARBURST sat down for a quick chat with Kryten himself, Robert Llewellyn...

STARBURST: Are you a science fiction fan?

ROBERT LLEWELLYN: I am! But interestingly I never realised that I was a fan! Even though I grew up watching Doctor Who and I loved being terrified of the Daleks, and I always watched Star Trek and almost certainly saw every science fiction film from 2001: A Space Odyssey onwards, I especially loved movies like Dark Star. I know now that obviously I was influenced by it, but because I didn't read science fiction books, I never put 2 and 2 together.

I really came into it much later in life through engineers and scientists, which seemed wrong as they did proper sciences. I mean we're talking proper clever people who went to Oxford University – like proper clever – not like me! And they were all reading science fiction and were really influenced by it and it's was only much later in life through them that I realise the connection and how this genre influenced us all and what science fiction is all about.

Do you think Red Dwarf has influenced the same kinds of people?

Absolutely! I've met some today! It's amazing how many have gone into a science subject or that type of work even because of Red Dwarf! Which when you hear that, it makes you just want to shout, No! But actually, because the science in Red Dwarf was real and is always based upon plausible concepts, even if its taken to an extreme. It's never just, 'plug the wibbly-wobbly into the googleflip'. It's actual science, particularly physics and material science theories that both Rob and Doug were both interested in and Doug continues to be. There is always a plausible scientific backbone behind the story, even if the story is ridiculous.

When you joined Red Dwarf, did you think it would leave such a legacy?

Oh no! Absolutely not! I started doing it in series three and at the end of that, I thought, what a brilliant job, but because the BBC were frequently doing shows that lasted only 2-3 series, of which, there are dozens of examples like Fawlty Towers, The Young Ones etc, we all thought that was it. So when we finished the third series in... 1989 (Robert laughs), there was a big party and I thought that was that. I would love to go back in time and meet myself in the loos of that party, and then say, you're going to still be doing this when you're 60, chum! It's all really quite absurd.

It can be very hard to take-over a role, was it difficult taking on the character from another actor?

I had never seen the Kryten episode, because I was on stage 6 or 7 nights a week, so I didn't watch tele. I mean, we didn't have VCRs and all that then. In fact, come to think of it, I didn't even have a tele! I just got to watch it at other people's houses! So there were no negative feelings. But I did feel a little anxious, when David Ross (who played the original Kryten) came back to be the voice of Talkie Toaster a couple of years later and by then, I had seen it and seen what he had done and realised that we were utterly different. But I really liked what he had done, I mean, I think it's a brilliant performance, but it's very different and I'm quite glad I didn't see it, because I might have found it quite intimidating if I had. And no-one really talked about it, apart from Craig who now goes on... "If only we had kept David on... I mean he were good... He was an actual actor who could actually remember shit, Bobby!"



Parent-Teacher Night

By Jeff Szpirglas

Mr. Kessler had been teaching for three years now, and he knew the routine. Make sure there were no surprises on those report cards. The last thing he needed tonight was a bunch of adults screaming at him about children's grades.

But still there was dread gnawing at his insides. The dread made his heart tick faster, and caused little rivulets of sweat to pop on his forehead. The dread caused his eyes to twitch in their sockets, and for that nervous tic of his to show itself in little snorts when he got upset. Mr. Kessler could feel it more and more as the night wore on.

In the first interview with the Baldersons, he had the jitters. Every teacher had the jitters for that first interview. Mr. Kessler was trying to squeeze twenty-five parent interviews in one night, after a busy day of school when he was already drained from shouting at the class all afternoon.

Mr. Kessler hated to yell, but what other choice was there? He tried to deal with his students as calmly as possible. But whenever he tried to teach something new, there were always problems. Nathan would start talking out. Richard would commence with farting noises. And that would set off the rest of the class, even the Good Ones.

Oh, they were all Good Ones. That's what Mr. Kessler kept telling himself. He didn't want to start labelling any of his students as Rotten Eggs.

But Austin...

Austin. How many times had he called Mr. and Mrs. Schneider about their son? Mr. Kessler kept a record of all the phone conversations. The Schneider file was by far the largest. It was only late November, still just the first third of the school year, and already the Schneider file was novel thick.

The Schneiders were slated at eight thirty-five that evening. Not the last parent-teacher meeting on his agenda, but just about. If he could only get through these meetings, and then the Schneiders...only then he could let his guard down.

It didn't help that Mrs. and Mr. Schneider were always on the defensive about their son. Didn't they know what kind of havoc he could cause in a school? Just last week alone he'd pulled Jacqueline Blum's hair. Not just a little yank. He'd actually pulled a clump of hair out of her head. The principal had been called, and a big meeting had been set up. But what had Mrs. Schneider said?

"We're so sorry. And so is Austin. He told us all about it, how some other boy had scared him, and how in a panic he'd just reached out and grabbed whatever had been in front of him. That poor girl just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, I guess."

Mr. Kessler tried to explain how it didn't look like any sort of accident, that Austin had been the one pestering the boy in the first place. He didn't even know how to explain what he thought he saw out of the corner of his eye - little Austin Schneider actually taking part of that clump of hair and eating it. Swallowing it. Forcing it down his throat!

If he had any proof, he'd have shown it to somebody. The principal. The police, even. But no sooner had Mr. Kessler seen it than it was done. Then Austin Schneider was staring at him with those wide eyes of his. And he was smiling!

Austin gave Mr. Kessler the creeps.

Mr. Kessler looked at the wall clock. Eight twenty-nine. He looked back at Ms. Luongo, who'd been in the room ranting at him for the past ten minutes. He tried so hard to make any sense of her blabbering on about her son's report card. What did it matter? Tony Luongo had a few Cs and mostly Bs. The kid was doing just fine. What was there to say? He was a good student. He could try a little harder. He'd told her this before. She knew. Why wouldn't she stop talking at him? Couldn't she see that her time was almost up? That Mr. Kessler needed some buffer time to prepare himself for the real challenge of the evening? Didn't she know the Schneiders were coming?

"I'm sorry, Ms. Luongo. We're out of time."

Ms. Luongo threw a sharp stare at the wall clock. Then she shot Mr. Kessler with a glance that pummelled him like a fist. "We've still got five minutes to

talk about my son," she insisted.

Mr. Kessler let out a sigh. "Okay," he admitted. "What else would you like to discuss?"

"For starters, how are you going to help Anthony?"

And that's what they discussed for the next five minutes. Mr. Kessler made all sorts of promises about how he was going to help Tony. Anything to fill up the time.

Precisely five minutes and thirty-eight seconds later came a knock at the door.

Mr. Kessler broke out into a fresh round of cold sweat.

"Time's up, I guess," Ms. Luongo said. She stood up and shook Mr. Kessler's hand. "I appreciate all that you're doing for my son."

Mr. Kessler barely had the strength left in him to shake her hand. He watched her leave the room. Not even a second passed before the door swung open and in barged Mr. and Mrs. Schneider. Mr. Schneider sported a dark suit. He'd obviously come here after work. There were bags under his eyes. Mr. Kessler knew those bags. He had a pair himself. Mrs. Schneider came clicking in on a pair of shiny red high-heeled shoes. She was a plump woman who belonged closer to the ground than the high-heels allowed, but she got into her chair without falling over.

The Schneiders and Mr. Kessler now sat on opposite sides of a row of student desks. Mr. Kessler opened his file and fished out a copy of Austin's report card. What broke the silence in the room was the return of Mr. Kessler's nervous tics. He tried to clear it, but the tic was an itch down there in his throat he couldn't get out.

Like he'd swallowed a strand of hair.

Goosebumps swelled across Mr. Kessler's arms and neck. He shivered, and caught Mr. Schneider's glance. Had he noticed?

"Let's talk about Austin, shall we?" Mr. Kessler tried. This interview was going to be some sort of battle, and Mr. Kessler was up against a pair of Sherman tanks. Mr. Kessler was just some lowly soldier tossed on the front lines.

"We've seen his grades," Mrs. Schneider returned, in as pleasant a voice as a parent could. "That's not what concerns us."

"His behaviour, I know. We've discussed this at length this year. It's just that, sometimes, Austin can..." Mr. Kessler stopped himself.

"Don't be afraid. Say it."

"Afraid of what?"

"Afraid to say what you think about our son. Believe me, we've heard it before."

No. Mr. Kessler was not going to play into this trap. "Austin is a student who has faced some struggles. He's still struggling. I want to find a way for us to help him."

Mrs. Schneider smiled. It took a second for Mr. Kessler to recognize it as the same smile Austin had smeared across his snide little face when he'd gulped down poor Jacqueline Blum's hair. "That's not what you're thinking at all, Mr. Kessler."

Mr. Kessler cleared his throat. It was like a whole head of hair was stuck down there. He coughed and sputtered.

"What do you mean?" he finally managed.

"Are you all right, Mr. Kessler?"

Mr. Kessler swallowed. His face was flushed red. He tapped on his desk. "I'm fine. Perhaps I'm coming down with a sore throat. That's all."

"Of course you are. Teachers are always the first to get whatever illness is brewing," Mr. Schneider said, knowingly. "But back to the subject. You were going to tell us what you really thought of our son, weren't you?"

Mr. Kessler stared past Mr. and Mrs. Schneider. He stared up at the clock. How many minutes until this interview was over? He could speak with one of the Schneiders over the phone, but both of them here, with him, behind closed doors? He couldn't bear it!

"Mr. Kessler?"

Mrs. Schneider actually had to wave her hand to catch Mr. Kessler's attention.

"Yes?"

"A monster."

"What?"

"Our son, Austin. You think he's a little monster, don't you?"

Mr. Kessler couldn't believe what he was hearing. "Why would you think that?"

But then it hit him, hard. He had called Austin just that. Not long after the incident with Jacqueline Blum, he'd pulled aside Austin. "You need to stop acting like a little monster," he'd told the kid, "and behave like a boy ought to." All Austin Schneider did was smile at him.

Great. How was he going to explain his way out of this one? Already he was sure the Schneiders could tell that they'd caught him. Were they going to complain to the principal? To the school board? Would it go that far?

Please, Mr. Kessler thought to himself, don't make a big deal of it. I was angry. I said something I shouldn't have. I need this job.

"The fact of the matter is, you're absolutely right."

Mr. Kessler blinked at Mrs. Schneider. "I'm sorry?"

"I know we defend him, but that's because he's our boy, and because we love him. But there are times when he can be, as you say, something of a monster."

"We just wanted to reassure you that we know what Austin is like," Mr.

Schneider chimed in.

Mr. Kessler felt the wave of relief rolling up in him, like a cool morning tide. "You do?"

"Absolutely. We know, because, let's face it, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree."

Mr. Kessler wrinkled his brow. "Come again?"

"Our son. Little monster. They all start that way. If you catch my drift."

"I'm not sure I do," Mr. Kessler started to say, but then he noticed Mrs. Schneider's nails. He hadn't noticed them before, but she'd started tapping them on the table. Goodness, they were long, and red. And sharp.

And what big eyes they both had. Just like their son.

And when they smiled at him together, he caught sight of such big teeth, too.

Mr. Kessler stumbled out of his chair and backed away. In doing so, he tripped over a desk and smacked onto the floor, head-first. His mind swam as something warm started pooling beneath him.

Mr. Kessler's world began to grow dark, but through the window above his head, he could still see the full moon gleaming hungrily at him.

At least he wouldn't have to sit through any more parent meetings.



PAUL MOUNT'S



This month the worlds of cinema and TV collide as *BATES MOTEL* continues and *FROM DUSK TILL DAWN* arrives, and we bring worrying news from the world of Amazon Prime...

Help! I can't tell the difference between films and the TV any more!!! The fine line has gone! Seriously, everywhere you look there's a TV show based on an (often quite) old film - *Fargo*, *About a Boy*, *Hannibal* - and there are lots more to come - *Damien* (see this month's *TTC*), *Twelve Monkeys*, *Constantine*, *Scream*, bloody Batman again in *Gotham* and - scandalously and outrageously for the movie was perfection itself - Frank Darabont's *The Mist*. Hollywood has, it seems, finally started doing what we might have suspected for a while - it's eating itself and then regurgitating its dinner. There are now officially no new ideas, just an assumption that people are so stupid they don't realise they're being served the same old warmed-up soup but in a new, weekly-sized container.

This development might be expected to leave me feeling angry, anxious and exasperated. But in truth, it's actually all turning out rather well. American TV has been on a creative roll for some time now, ever since the traditional 'Network TV' model with all its inherent drawbacks - advertiser requirements, censor appeasement, demographic targets - has been challenged by the rise of cable and online broadcasting, where storytellers can be true to themselves and allow their imaginations to soar away from the stifling restrictions of American Prime Time and its relentless ratings race. This is the new TV world which, in the last decade, has given us shows like *Dexter*, *The Walking Dead*, *Breaking Bad* and literally dozens more which have elevated TV drama into a bona fide art form. Why not, then, revisit ideas and stories told across one ninety-odd minute feature film and explore those in a dozen or so TV episodes, allowing the concept to breathe

and the characters to grow? With some trepidation, I have to say I'm not entirely averse to the idea because the results, so far, have been pretty damned impressive...

Case in point: welcome to *Bates Motel*. Now the brain of a lesser man would quite literally have been frazzled, unable to process the logic of it, utterly incapable of making the huge imaginative leap required to make sense of it. *Norman Bates* is using an iPhone. Young Norman (now played by Freddie Highmore) the psychopathic motel-dwelling killer of Hitchcock's classic 1960 shocker, *Psycho*, is using one of the 21st century's signature 'bits of kit' in a series which purports, obliquely, to be a prequel to a film made and set over fifty years ago. Does not compute! Does not compute!

Fortunately, I am nothing if not that lesser man, so when I first saw Norman crack open his cell (as they call them in the States) early in last year's first season of *Bates Motel* I had to just accept it, let it go, and get on with the show. Madness awaited - or worse, going back to *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* (I don't care how much better it got, life's too short to give any show sixteen weeks grace to find its feet) - if I tried to bend Norman's new timeline into something which could be reconciled with his past, or is it his future? No, stop it, move away from the anomaly...

Luckily, *Bates Motel* is such a good show - probably just about the best on the box at the moment, believe me - that trying to rationalise how *this* Norman and that Norman can possibly be the same person risks detracting from the appreciation of an enthralling, beautifully-crafted series which more than fills the 'TV's friendly serial killer' gap left by the departed *Dexter*. Described as a "contemporary prequel" (ah, that explains it), *Bates Motel* sees Norma Bates and her delicate son Norman relocate to the resort town of White Pine Bay in Oregon where Norma purchases the ramshackle and familiarly eerie motel... which, in the original film, was situated in Fairvale in California. Ohhh, my brain... But there's to be no quiet life beside the seaside for Norma and Norman; by the end of the very first episode of the first series a man is dead and the pair are smuggling his body out of the motel in a carpet.

It quickly becomes apparent that *Bates Motel* isn't going to be a slave to the film which inspired it (or its sequels) and is using the audience's knowledge of *Psycho* to tell an entirely different story in, quite clearly, an altogether different timeline. *Bates Motel* isn't interested in reconciling the Norman depicted on the big screen by Anthony Perkins with TV's Norman (Highmore, ironically, could pass for a young Perkins), but is more interested in generating a *Twin Peaks* vibe as it exposes and explores all the secrets, passions, mysteries and intrigues which





seethe in the underbelly of an insular small-town American community. Norman - clearly troubled and disturbed and with an uncomfortably-close relationship to his mother - tries to navigate a path through life in High School, his anxious mother desperate to keep him on the straight and narrow even as she blunders into one scandal and crisis after another, often attracting the attention of surly local Police chief Alex Romero (Nestor Carbonell).

Bates Motel is great stuff in its own right but it's made so much better thanks to stellar performances from Highmore and Vera Farmiga as Norma. Already a TV Zone favourite thanks to her turns in both *Up In The Air* and *The Conjuring*, Farmiga is a naturalistic, passionate talent and she imbues Norma with a frantic, nervy anxiety and a quiet dignity even when events conspire to spiral horribly out of control - which they do, frequently. Season one focussed on Norman and Norma pitching up in White Pine Bay, the murder of the motel's disgruntled former owner, the arrival of Norman's wayward half-brother

Dylan (Max Thieriot), Norman's attraction to the flighty Bradley (Nicola Peltz) and finally the murder of Norman's flirty teacher Blair (Keegan Connor Tracey). Plenty going on and the pedal rarely came off the metal.

Season two (just finished on the Universal Channel in the UK) has been a little slower-paced and with apparently lower stakes. Norma has been concerning herself with stopping a proposed new road development which will devastate the business of the motel, Norman has struck up a friendship with the punky Cody, Dylan's father - Norma's own brother - arrives in town and Norma makes a powerful new ally/enemy in her fight against the road development project in the form of local businessman Nick Ford. But having reaped the benefits of its establishing season, *Bates Motel* has been able to spend time really developing its characters and their relationships and, as usual, the tension starts to ratchet up as the series finale approaches with Norman kidnapped and buried alive in a shallow 'hot box', Sheriff Romero having his

own suspicions about the death of Blair.

Bates Motel is a welcome addition to TV's ever-growing list of movie spin-off series, a classy, moody show which revels in its ability to constantly wrong-foot its audience and, in Highmore and Farmiga, delivering one of the great screen partnerships of the 21st century. Frankly, who cares if Hollywood's run out of new ideas if it's able to reinvent old ones as brilliantly as this?

FROM DUSK TILL DAWN: THE SERIES

If the two ropery, straight-to-DVD sequels to 1996's *From Dusk till Dawn* taught us anything, it was that *From Dusk till Dawn* didn't need sequels. The original was a startling and vibrant mash-up of the horror and contemporary gangster genres courtesy of Quentin Tarantino's typically sassy script and Robert Rodriguez's punchy direction. But once the film's played its ace and shot its bolt - vampires and monsters! - then there's really not much more to do and the story's told. Rodriguez clearly didn't think so because he's refashioned the first film into a ten-part TV series for his El Ray network in the States (available in the UK courtesy of those nice folk at Netflix). But I have to ask - does *From Dusk till Dawn* need a TV series any more than it needed its forgotten sequels? Ten episodes later and I'm still not sure...

Rodriguez has admitted that he's long been fascinated by the last scene of the movie; you might remember the matte shot which indicated that the - excuse me - Titty Twister bar in Mexico, where all the madness and mayhem of the second half of the film took place, was built over an old Aztec temple. There was clearly a history and backstory here and Rodriguez has used his series to explore that and explain exactly what the creatures are and how they came into existence. But he's done it by going right back to square one and telling the story of the film all over again in excruciating detail, often agonisingly slowly and with lots and lots of talking



before finally cutting loose in the last couple of episodes and striking out in a new direction.

So we have the Gecko brothers - Seth (D.J. Cotrona) and Richie (Zane Holtz) - on the run and headed for the Mexican border. An en route liquor store heist goes badly wrong and the pair find themselves pursued by Ranger Gonzalez (Jesse Garcia) who vows revenge for the death of his partner Earl McGraw (Don Johnson). The pair hijack the RV of the Fuller family and use it to cross to Mexico where they arrive at the Titty Twister bar and all Hell breaks loose. Familiar stuff if you've seen the film, but with a few new bells and whistles added to keep it fresh. Richie now has supernatural visions and is drawn towards the bar by an exotic, beckoning female figure; there's lots of family background involving the Fuller family (the film's father figure Jacob, played by Harvey Keitel, is replaced here by the reliable Robert Patrick); Rodriguez gets to explore the history of his vampire creatures and Gonzalez is tireless in his pursuit of the Gecko boys.

But what works well in a punchy 108-minute movie tends to drag across ten tortuous and often quite long episodes. The first episode covers about the first ten minutes of the film and it seems to take an absolute age for the group to finally arrive in Mexico (albeit via one tense shootout episode where the boys appear to be cornered, along with their prisoners, in a motel). By the time they reach the TT Bar, the audience are gasping for vampires (although we've already seen a few in earlier instalments) and the show finally starts to pick up the pace in seventh episode 'Pandemonium', a blood-bath of torn-off limbs, gouging blood, brutal and graphic decapitations and general Grand Guignol blood-letting. Lovely stuff but it's taken an age to get this far...

Although the show eventually starts to find new ways to tell a story we've already seen it's very nearly a case of too little, too late as the series has been too slavish to the storyline of the movie, pausing



only to fill in the gaps and add a bit of colour. Many of the episodes are painfully pedestrian (Rodriguez's contributions are easily the best and the most dynamic), the characters are generally pretty unlikable (and sometimes inconsistently-written) and whilst the show is clearly decently-budgeted and has a real cinematic sweep to it, it still can't quite stretch to some of the more extraordinary prosthetics and FX of the original film.

It's hard to be too enthusiastic about a show which sticks so closely to its source material and it's difficult not to wonder why you're watching a show which is just remaking a film which was perfectly decent the first time around. *From Dusk till Dawn* isn't a bad show but its first season just feels over-familiar and unimaginative, a needless and pointless retreat which seems to exist purely as a vanity project for its creator. But the show has done well enough to earn a second, thirteen-episode series next year and the end of the first season suggests that we could be in for

something a little more original as *From Dusk till Dawn* is afforded the opportunity to find its own identity as a TV show in its own right. But please, let's not remake *The Hangman's Daughter* and... the other one...

AND FINALLY...

Disturbing news from the world of Amazon Prime. It appears that, contrary to all my best and most heartfelt advice/wishes/prayers, Amazon have commissioned an entire series of Chris (*The X-Files*) Carter's disastrous, rank apocalyptic pilot *The After* (see TV Zone 399). It appears that all that clumsy musingling - inexplicable bodily symbols! Double-jointed alien! Mysterious power blackout! Explosions! Girl taking her vest off! Swearing! - paid off, but at least Carter's got the opportunity now to put right what was so painfully wrong and ugly about his pilot episode and at least try to tell a proper, coherent story instead of just relying on shock 'communion us!' tactics and allowing himself to get carried away by the freedom of making telly away from the glare of a network. I'm not normally a second chance kind of guy but Carter's got a lot in the bank courtesy of *The X-Files* (well, its early seasons at least) so I'm willing to give him the benefit of the doubt on this one. But there's a lot of retooling to be done if *The After* is to stand a cat in Hell's chance of developing into something even halfway decent and watchable. But the very fact that Amazon have commissioned it on the basis of its awful pilot tends to suggests that they thought there wasn't much wrong with it first time out of the gate.

Perhaps, on mature reflection, it's not so surprising that TV is turning tried-and-trusted old movies into series when the best our more seasoned creatives can come up with is sloppy guff like *The After*...



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it's only a movie

a column by JORDAN ROYCE

In the superhero movie business Fox and Sony must feel like cuckolded lovers. Having to hide in the wardrobe, consoling themselves with a cheeky hand shuffle, and having to watch through the gap in the door as Marvel Studios give audiences the world over a really good seeing to. But wait, what is this I hear? Fox have got it together at last? Reviews are in, fandom has spoken, Bryan Singer has managed to resurrect the X-Men franchise with **X-Men: Days of Future Past**. What a relief. I had seen trailers that suggested a jumbled up mess of a movie was coming our way. Thankfully I was wrong, and Marvel Studios had better get ready. There's a new sheriff in town! (Well, some of Singer's mates might occasionally dress up as sheriffs anyway.)

It's been a long and tortuous road for party monster Bryan Singer (and I'm not talking about the road away from his house after you've jumped out of his bathroom window). He pretty much revived the comic book movie in the public consciousness with **X-Men** back in 2000 (boy do I feel old). I just cannot see the market for these movies taking off when they did without **X-Men** and **Blade** breaking ground for Raimi and Marvel Studios to come in and join the party. As much as I enjoyed the first installment, **X-Men 2** took things to a whole new

level. I always had a soft spot for old Nightcrawler. As a kid he fascinated me, and his entrance in the opening scenes still blows me away. His teleport rescue scene was genuinely the first time I ever felt that cinema had finally gained the level of expertise to convincingly put an ensemble comic book on the screen. Then, in 2006, it came time to cap off this trilogy with the big one...

Along with "The Night Gwen Stacy Died", the X-Men "Dark Phoenix" saga was a towering classic. Shockingly, Singer bugged off for a pay rise to helm **Superman Returns**. We were then in the safe hands of Matthew Vaughn, who instantly jumped ship for personal reasons (right after reading the first draft of the script probably). Rubbish Brett Ratner then took over and managed to deliver a terribly disappointing finale. Shockingly successful at the box office, the reviews were unkind, and fandom had a meltdown. In defence of the poor chump, Ratner never stood a chance with the legacy he had dumped upon him. Singer had pretty much left them in the lurch, and even nicked Cyclops, as James Marsden was unable to complete a full role in **X3** due to commitments to Singer and his Superman movie. Writer Simon Kinberg was also shackled. Instead of having free reign with the X-Men sandbox he had to be careful not to interfere with any characters that might pop up in the upcoming Wolverine prequel. Gambit would have been the standout newbie otherwise. It is not surprising that Kinberg was relying on the shock death of Charles Xavier to elevate this sad flick. In the end even this fell flat, as did the death of Jean Grey, leaving a nightmare for the poor sod that would next have to pick up the pieces from this fiasco. Shortly afterwards, **X-Men Origins: Wolverine** (remember when Origins was going to be a movie series in its own right?) well and truly drove the final nails into the franchise's coffin. By the winter of 2009, the franchise was dead and buried. It had taken a lot of bad decisions and poor choices to screw this pooch. To add insult to injury, Singer had also shafted us all with **Superman Returns**. Boy had Singer screwed things up. Or do I have that the wrong way round?

It should have been game over, but in a stroke of genius, **X-Men: First Class** brought the franchise back with a critically



Watch out Patrick! Magneto is trying to turn you into a SEA MONKEY!

acclaimed vengeance. I loved everything about this reboot (except for January Drones). It was Bond-esque, set in the ultimate period of cool – the early '60s, and told a simple story of friends going their separate ways. It was a fantastic way to reinvigorate things. Great cast, superb period setting. You could really take your time to develop the franchise over several movies. A masterful reboot, and it WAS a reboot (more on this later). Matthew Vaughn delivered a really unique movie. When I heard that he was still on board for the sequel set in the '70s I could not have been more excited. Unfortunately, whilst it would seem that there were more things sliding down beanstalks on **Jack the Giant Slayer** than we realised, Singer still managed to find time to concoct his career survival plan, resulting in a massive change of course for the franchise.

As I said earlier, the early response to this new movie was extremely positive. As I write this column it has already amassed a mighty 92% on Rotten Tomatoes.

X-Men fans and the general public alike are enamoured. So what planet am I on exactly? As rescues go, **X-Men: Days of Future Past** is the most disappointing since the damsel in distress in Donkey Kong ended up having to French kiss a sweaty plumber. It's a flimsy, lightweight apology of a movie. A movie that harbours



Her hair looks really nice in this movie. A lovely shade of red.



Bryan and Hugh relax by playing the "One Hand Too Many" game.

delusions of being an epic, whilst only really serving as a superior piece of fanwank, attempting to cover up a myriad of reasons why nothing past the third X-movie fits together.

The main problem with DoFP is that it cannot be a sequel to *X-Men: First Class*. The latter is definitely a reboot. At no stage in the creative process was it ever intended to fit into the continuity of ANY of the previous films in the series, and NO, the cameos by Hugh Jackman and Rebecca Romijn do not contradict this. They were included merely as a cheeky nod, and a surprise for the viewer. This was copiously explained by Vaughn at the time of the release of *First Class*. This attempt to retcon a reboot and an original series is not bold as it merely serves to undermine the premise, and undermines any credibility. To answer all of the critics of the contorted continuity, the Mighty Singer asks that, "some things you let go". Wow. That simple, eh?

Continuity and purity are major concerns for the hardcore nerd. I am probably a borderline purist with regards to comic book adaptations. I don't really have a problem with changes, or updating any property. I certainly can't fault Marvel Studios, who have selectively jettisoned canon when needed. I just believe that change should have a purpose or a reason. I never understood the sense in spending hundreds of millions of dollars just to buy the film rights for a property then completely change the core fundamentals. Just look at the imploding mess with the *Fantastic Four* movie. With regards to continuity I can overlook things, but DoFP

takes the continuity of all of the X-Men movies and distorts them to the point that nothing makes any sense, which is just bad filmmaking. The teenage Emma Frost in X-Men

Origins: Wolverine and the fact that black-actor Bill Duke plays the same character in *X-Men: The Last Stand* as Peter Dinklage does in this instalment are just the tip of the iceberg. The dates and events from all the movies do not marry up. Nothing fits together, and you are supposed to ignore all of this. Sorry, it just isn't good enough. Isn't it bizarre that the same fanboys who had an embolism over the treatment of The Mandarin by Marvel Studios are just fine with this? Very strange. As is the acceptance that you can just bring characters back from the dead. I can buy that Magneto has his powers back. You can give a pass on that. Lazy, but it gets a pass. The treatment of Xavier is criminal. Surely the return from the dead is pretty much the biggest story you could ever tell? Well, you need talent to actually pull it off I guess. I'm sorry, but this is the twenty-first century, and with the standard of writing on TV currently knocking it out of the park, why have we suddenly decided to accept crap like this at the cinema?

The continuity is the dodgy foundation which contaminates this film. It infects and constrains what must have seemed like a really good idea. The film adaptation of a comic book classic, doubling as a soft reboot. A chance to mix the favourites from both casts. Said classic being "The Days of Future Past", which was arguably the first proper time-travel classic. It was a simple tale. Kitty Pryde travels, from the future to modern day, to prevent an assassination that causes the mutant race to be hunted to extinction by giant Sentinels. A superb piece of comic history delivered by John Byrne and Chris Claremont, both at the top of their game. This story really deserved better than its treatment here. Like the Dark Phoenix saga, the tale itself is lost amongst all the white noise. There was so much to mine from the comic source material for any competent screenwriter, powerful stuff like the Holocaust allegories and the mutant graveyard. But these are swept aside as Singer scrambles about re-formatting his X-Men hard drive.



These guys needn't have bothered, the screenwriters had already shafted her...

I did enjoy DoFP, but it is a poor entry, and totally undeserving of the fan hype. I just feel that many fans have been used to such poor entries in the saga that just the sight of the old cast has caused a wave of nostalgia for something better. In reality the cast themselves were very badly treated. Aside from Xavier, Magneto, Mystique, and Wolverine in the '70s, everyone else is a 2D cutout. In particular, the old-school spend the movie trapped in one room in a shonky Chinese monastery set. Leaving no scope for character development. The new faces couldn't even be introduced properly under such constraints. This is how they managed to chuck away a talent like Fan Bingbing on a (literally) Blink and you'll miss it role.

Back in the '70s, Fassbender, Lawrence and McAvoy do manage to introduce some much-needed storytelling, but even that hits the bricks when Magneto suddenly starts acting like a twat halfway through the film. Until this point you could see some merit in his point of view, and understand that Xavier and he are only slightly apart in their goals. Obviously that's a bit too deep for a modern audience. Let's have him go bananas, magically rewire some sentinels, and fulfil his ultimate plan – drop a footie stadium around the White House. Wowzers. Magneto's grand plan was to create the world's biggest art installation!

I did enjoy one thing. Quicksilver.

So the X-Men franchise is ready to continue with its new respective casts. All inconveniences swept away by fan acceptance. The only question for Fox now is who will take the helm for *X-Men: Age of Apocalypse*? Because one thing is almost certain: unless you're oil-eyed and dressed like a Roman gladiator, you won't be seeing Mr Singer anytime soon.

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The Mighty Singer welcomes a new recruit to his School For Gifted Children

WOW

Very Friendly

Much Fun



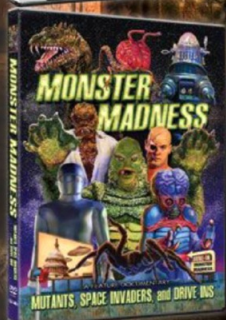
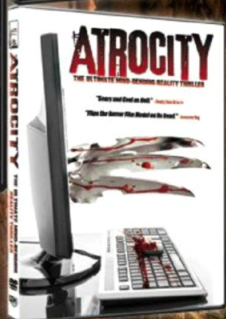
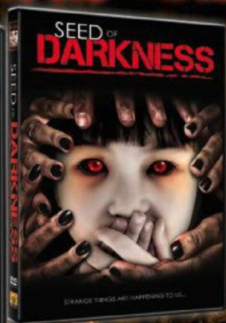
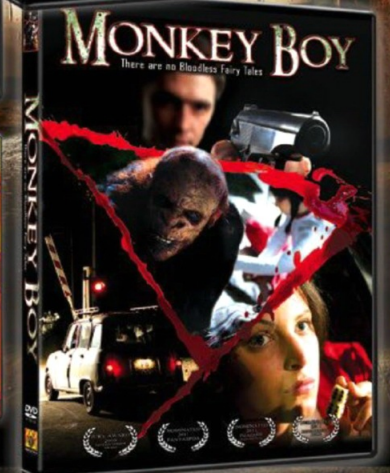
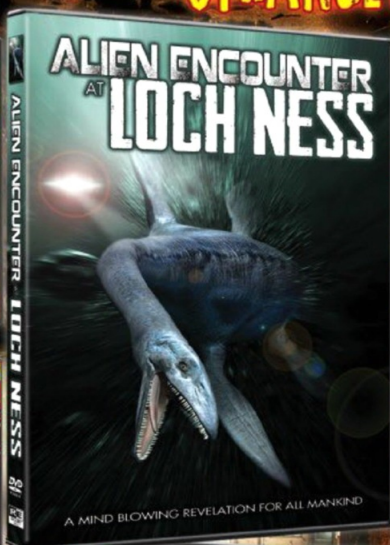
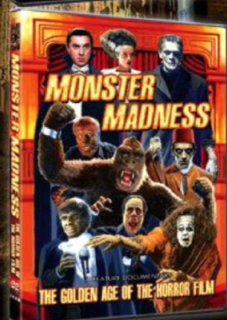
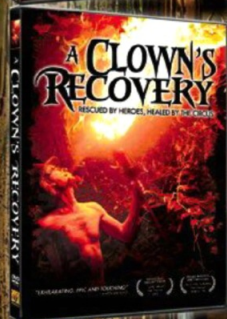
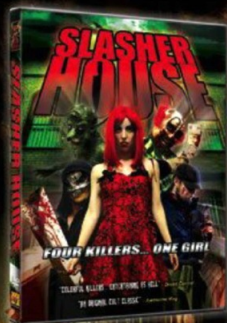
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